

**LIFE OF SAI BABA**

**VOLUME IV**

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## **Preface to Part IV**

To write a preface to the works of our Master Revered Sri Narasimha Swamiji, will be a feat. Anyhow I have made a bold attempt upon request.

Every biography or a life of a person is a story of adventure. The spiritual and mystical personalities of the world represent an adventure of a worthy living, besides thinking intellectually in the pursuit of their lives. The life of Sai Baba especially gives a very tough treat for the spiritual seekers. There are indeed a few writings only which present so vivid a picture of the life and teachings of Sai Baba—in so descriptive a form, and for this reason, the present volume, (Part IV of Life of Sri Sai Baba}, possesses a value of its own. The publishers therefore feel it again a happy privilege to offer this volume to the public and Sai devotees in particular, believing that in so doing they are making one of the best gifts which a man can make to his brother devotees.

Devotees will really understand that the mighty pen of Revered Sri Narasimha Swamiji wrote from the lips of Sai Baba. In my personal experience, I have found two-in-one, i.e., the physical frame of Sri Swamiji and spirit of Baba that has blessed us with four volumes of the life of Sri Sai Baba. We can consider the IV volume as 11th Skanda of Bhagavata to Sai devotees.

I remember that one of the Greatest of Devotees of Baba, Bhakta Parayana Das Ganu Maharaj, once said 'A jeweller like Sri Narasimha Swamiji knows the value of a gem and will not rest till he brings the brilliance of the crystal to the people's notice".

Readers can understand that how much toil and labour (in the form of Guru Seva) might have been taken by Rev. Swamiji to unearth and present this flawless diamond—The Life of Sai Baba—to all of us.

In a close study of the life of Sai Baba from Parts I to IV, one can understand that truth is dealt in all aspects to feel and follow with concrete examples of the right perspective to realize one's Self.

A monumental present (in the form of spiritual food) has been provided to philosophers and spiritualists alike, through his books, especially The Life of Sai Baba, IV volume. No doubt, these intellectual works of Rev. Swamiji will really

get into the religious history of India. His whole life, I can say, has been dedicated on spiritual pursuits to cater to hungry souls on the path.

May Sri Sai Baba, the Benevolent Master, and Sri Narasimha Swamiji awaken us with a renewed interest in our spiritual practice to attain the glorious heights of spiritual realisation.

— **Radhakrishnaswamiji**

## CHAPTER I

### Baba And School Of Philosophy

In religious matters, ordinary people ask many questions without considering the implications thereof and without having any definite idea themselves as to what the questions mean. For instance, to ask about any person to what school of philosophy he belongs, is rather absurd. School of philosophy is for those who pride themselves upon their mastery of some branch of philosophy and who have got egotism enough to identify themselves with only one set of ideas or one school of philosophy as they will call it, and reject the others as being worthless or untrue. Ordinary men have no philosophy at all. Highly advanced souls like Baba also have no school of philosophy, because all ideas are theirs and all wisdom is theirs, and they are not likely to identify themselves with one line of thought to the exclusion of others. Therefore, the question to what school of philosophy Baba belongs, is strictly unanswerable except by saying that He belongs to no school or to all schools. Yet as the question is natural, some sort of rough answer which will satisfy the ordinary reader is sought to be given. But one must always remember that Baba was a *Ritambhara Prajna* or *China Samvit*. All knowledge is in the universal Soul or ultimate Reality identifying itself with the centre of all existence, and that is that Sat Chit Ananda, which has manifested itself in the Universe. There have been many minds in many places and in many ages. All of them and their thoughts and ideas belong to it, but it is not confined to any one of them. Baba at any moment without any preparation would answer any question from his standard of *Parabmhmaan* or *Ritambara Prajna* and expound any view. But ordinarily Baba dealt with people only at their own level or in the levels which they can expect soon to reach, and so his answers would disclose material for showing that Baba approved some times of one school of philosophy and sometimes another. Really, however, he approved of truth and reality and, if any school of philosophy can claim to be coeval with or corresponding to truth and reality, that school is Baba's.

Baba knew full well that persons coming to him were hardly in a position to reach the heights of advaitic realisation which Sankara aimed at, and, therefore, he was reluctant to give out a complete outline of the system of philosophic thoughts known as advaitism and woven in Sankara's works for instance. But he was great enough to see that advaitic philosophy has its very legitimate place in any complete idea of the Universe and of ourselves. In point of fact, Jnaneswari, the well-known Maratti poetical commentary on the Bhagavad Gita, is based upon Sankara's commentary on the Gita, which of course, is mainly on advaitic line, Baba had great reverence for Jnaneswar and Jnaneswari, and referred people like N.G. Chandorkar and others, who professed to admire and follow Jnaneswar, to pick out for themselves from Jnaneswari, especially on matters of Jnana. Therefore, it is not necessary nor is it possible to go fully into the question of the exact advaitic view of life to which Baba subscribed and addressed to his devotees.

Baba seldom delivered any lengthy address to his disciples, especially after the masses began to come to him in 1908 or 1909. Some of his rare discourses are recorded in Das Ganu's chapters, and some of these chapters give out philosophical sketches which look like advaitism, but there is a sufficient admixture of other schools of philosophy in every one of Baba's utterances, and, therefore, it is safe for us to remember that we should not identify Baba with any particular school of philosophy. We must remember always the principle enunciated in interpreting case law that any general position advanced must be considered as based upon and relating to the facts of the case. In Baba's case, the advaitic remarks that he offered to Chandorkar should not be taken as an absolute statement which should be addressed to all. On the other hand he did not address it to all. In point of fact, the vast majority of persons that came to Baba were hardly fit to understand high philosophy. They were generally mediocre persons with mediocre intellect and obliged to come to Baba on account of their difficulties or on account of their attachment, without having any special pretensions to a capacity to understand subtle systems of philosophy. In several cases, Baba, however, did valuable piece of service for the ultimate

development and growth of the spirit of capable devotees by giving them hints to work on, and the Hints sometimes bordered on advaitic philosophy. We shall in subsequent paragraphs point out what hints he gave and how.

1. (Baba's Charters & Sayings, Nos. 120 and 121). Who am I? Who are We?

120. Baba often said, "Who are we? Night and day think on this".

2. About 1915 R.A. Tarkhad, Managing Director of a mill, got into a compartment at Manmad in the dark and was fighting for a seat with a police constable who was there. When R.A.T. arrived in Shirdi, Baba asked him:-

With whom were you persisting in contest this morning? Bhav (brother), we should not engage in contest with such people! "Who are We?" This we must enquire into.

R.A.T, saw first Baba's reference to the social inequality of the disputing parties, and later on, the Vedantic meaning of the words, i.e., the unity of those parties in Brahman.

3. Baba (to Bala Bhav, i.e., Sitaram Dev): We have only to see (i.e., know) our self.

4. 121. In October 1917, Baba spoke to a Bombay lady:-Mother, what do you want? Ask for it. Lady : Let me be free from the whirl of births and deaths.

Baba: (laughing) : Is this all you want? What! Have you come to die?

Lady : (Shocked), Baba, I do not at all understand you.

Baba : Think who you are.

Lady : I do not understand.

Baba : (pointing to her husband): He will tell you.

Then the lady went with her husband to her lodgings and asked him what Baba meant.

Husband : Baba's words are mysterious. I cannot be sure I have made out his meaning. Probably he means something like this. The Jiva goes on reincarnating any number of times till it gets Sakshatkar i.e. sees or realises God. Baba is God. But people seeing him do not get full faith and do not see him, i.e., feel him to be God; and hence they do not get Mukti.

One must learn from the sastras that essentially Jiva and Siva are one. You think yourself to be a Jiva, is it not?

Lady : Yes

Husband : Baba and the Sastras want you to regard yourself as Siva or God.

Lady : No. No. I am a petty sinner—a Jiva, and not the great God Siva.

Husband : No doubt that is your feeling. But Baba means that by constantly regarding yourself as God, your deeply ingrained belief that you are only a finite Jiva will be removed. This process continued, may be through numerous births, and strengthened and helped by contact with Saints, will give you the firm belief that you are Brahman. That must be Baba's meaning,

(The pair again returned to Dwaraka Mai).

Baba: Mother, I have listened (from here) to all that your husband told you. Keep that in mind.

Baba sometimes in the course of his talk on other matters introduced the question, 'Who am I?' 'Who am I is the test question for Atma Vichara. Yoga Vasishtha says:

*Ramasva atma vicharoyam koham soyam itirupah*

*Avidya jatasamsara dahane dahanasmritah*

Vasishtha says to Rama, "O! Rama, this is Atma Vichara. It takes the form of 'Who am I', and it burns up the gross of ignorance and samsara".

Now, Baba naturally talked about the inner nature of various problems, for instance, property. In the sadhak's progress, he has to analyse I and all its derivatives like 'mine' etc. Now, 'mine' means property. To help Sadhakas Baba had several times to explode their notions of property. Property and egotism are both warping the real vision, which would enable a person to understand what he really is, that is, what the self is. Self is distinguished from I in this way. I is the egotistic aspect of the self. Too much of identification with the body, and its particularities is involved in the I. The real self is more inward, and is the true basis of the I. That self is regarded as the one thing that underlies all selves, that is, the Universal Self. It is the same as the Paramatma, the Parabrahman. It is God. So, on one occasion, when Baba wanted to show people how ridiculous

fighting about property was, he said that at Puntamba, which he once visited, he discovered two parties were fighting with each other bitterly, and he wanted to know what the bone of contention was. He found out a pot full of coins was there, and that was what they were fighting for. While they were fighting, he quietly moved on to the pot, and removed the pot away. Then he put the questions, 'Who am I? and 'Whose is the pot?' He said, 'I am the pot and the pot is mine', thus showing that notions of property were highly artificial and baseless. As Goldsmith put it, 'The world is mine', one can treat everything on earth as one's property and rejoice over it so long as there is no other person to run counter to one's thought or activity. Therefore, Baba wanted to disabuse people of their notions of property, and took occasion to correct the ordinary people's notions of property.

Once Kondaji's (a Marwadi) stack of hay took fire. Baba tried to prevent it by sending him to go and look at it. But he returned without seeing it properly, and then said there was no fire. Then Baba pointed out to the smoke issuing from the stack. He then ran up and found that the whole thing had been reduced to ashes. People in the neighbourhood, with neighbouring stacks, were all afraid that the brisk breeze that was blowing would set their stacks also on fire. Baba then came up, and going round Kondaji's stack, drew a line of water round it, and said, 'Only this stack will be burnt'. Kondaji, however, was very sorry that he had lost his property. Then Baba said, 'How stupid is this? The marwadi talks of himself as his body, that is the form made up of flesh, bones etc. Hay is something totally different. What has he to do with the stack or the stack to do with him? Hallo. Marwadi you better make up for this loss in some other transaction'. Thus. Baba gave him some practical advice to get over his grief, and at the same time pointed out that philosophically speaking, there was no basis for the notion of either 'I' or 'Mine". It is ruinous for any soul that desires its true welfare to go on dwelling over and over again upon I and 'Mine'. When he thinks of the I it does not get to the real inwardness of the I. On the other hand, it centres its emphasis on everything unimportant. For instance, if you ask a boy whom you meet, 'Who are you?' you may get ten different answers, such as, 'I

am a boy, I am named Rama, I am the son of Krishna, I am a Hindu, I am aged 16, I am a boy attending St. Peter's School', etc. That is, every one of these things is not he, but it is an accident attached to him which he mentions as he. What is the central core round which all these accidents gather? That he does not know. Philosophers might say, There is a piece of Chaitanya or Pure Consciousness which, however, changes its purity and gets attached to some external body, and then a particularity comes into it, namely, a red haired youth. So, the I becomes a red haired youth. Thus we develop various notions of I, which strictly speaking are not true, and which do not help us in the ultimate goal that we have to reach, however useful some of them may be for our progress in our material circumstances. Therefore, Baba tried to rebuke this egotism especially when it showed itself in offensive forms. *Abhimana* means overfondness of dwelling on this particularity you call I connected with the body, and it also comes in relation to property, Therefore, the most important thing to be attained in the case of a sadhaka is to lessen and remove this *abhimana* to dissociate himself from the body idea. I and 'mine' represent the body idea. Baba has rendered great service in exposing this idea, (as we will show in a separate chapter).

The term, School of philosophy, has a meaning only to theoretical and intellectual labourers like college professors and students. Abstract philosophies do not spring up in life, where (1) complex problems involving theory, etc., rise and (2) practical methods are evolved for progress and satisfaction not necessitating an enunciation of problem or solution. Once a spiritual advance is made and a certain position reached, differences in theory between schools of philosophy are not seen at all and their solution becomes unnecessary. For saints and sages like Sai Baba, there is no unsolved problems of philosophy. Again schools of philosophy rise only amongst theorists and intellectuals, who see things in their separateness and dogmatise. Dogmas lead to bitter controversies. To the person who has reached a high level, life is a whole. His whole life and life all round at all levels, become intelligible, orderly, controlable and single. Such siddhas get on with life and have no troubles. Contradictions

and the irreconcilable are no contradictions or irreconcilable at all to the siddhas. A man standing at one end of a long alley sees the two sides of the alley meeting at a point. But to the place owner who runs through or flies above them, there is no point of juncture, and all the way is open and unobstructed. Words and our brains are poor instruments to grasp or express the entire truth of Reality. It is a firm principle with siddhas not to waste their time to discuss the problems of the ignorant or to take sides along with them on such questions.

Sai Baba used to find Chandorkar, Khaparde and others, very often discussing amongst themselves, what interpretation they should put upon Baba's words in the light of one theory or another. Baba invariably dissuaded them from doing so, for as they gradually progressed they would themselves understand what was necessary, and that was quite enough.

The real truth when reached in actual life is so different from the guesses one makes especially after enormous discussion and argument about what the truth is. Persons having various doubts as to the state of realization of God or the soul, come into the presence of one who has realized thinking they would ask the latter questions to clear the doubts. But they simply sit and find questions unnecessary. Persons in a state of calm with ability to face the truth, and allow their minds and hearts to soak in it, find their doubts and problems all dissolved. This has happened frequently at Ramanasram. Similarly people sat before Sai who could grip every one's mind and put it into the correct attitude. Occasionally God-realizers like Ramana Maharishi and Sai Baba may drop a hint or two and clear a difficulty. The difficulty to understand or reconcile is found mostly not in the theoretical portion of the philosophy but in the Sadhaka's ability to realise its truth. We see at each higher step more and more of the truth and less and less of difficulty, i.e., the difficulties that daunted us when we had not conquered our self, and when passions and egotism clouded our view. To Saints like Sai who are Samartha Sadgurus, the sishya's entire mind, its state and difficulties are all quite plain, and the Siddha can easily take it along to appreciate and attain the final goal of life without allowing any problem or hindrance to arise.

Sri Sai Baba himself pointed this out in connection with his friends and fellow-workers. In Baba's Charters & Sayings, 175, Baba mentioned that intellectual differences frequently obstruct one's progress in spiritual and philosophical matters, and that the solution for them was not from an intellectual point of view, but from a new path, i.e., a path of faith given and adopted. Prof Kant discussing the question of reality, intelligibility and quality of the soul, world, and God, said that this could not be solved by pure reason, but by practical expediency, i.e., by adopting some rule that in practice works and yields satisfactory results. In the above mentioned B.C. & S. 175, Baba states that himself and three others were studying *puranas* and other works and discussing among themselves (obviously on an intellectual basis) how to get realization, and they had their own differences. One stressed the necessity of depending upon oneself, as the Gita says, *udhdharet atmana*. Another, equally self-sufficient, said that the main thing was to make the mind self-centred, free from thoughts and doubts, because it was we who were in everything and everywhere. A third companion said that *Vichara* was the thing to be stressed, and *Vichara* consisted in the *Viveka* regarding the difference between '*Nitya*' and '*Anitya*', the Changeable and the Unchangeable, the Changeable form and the formless Unchangeable Reality. Obviously with all this controversies they were not anywhere near God-realisation. Baba disliked all these metaphysical and intellectual discussion and stressed the practical steps that had to be taken i.e., to approach a Guru, and surrender one's *Tan, Man, Dan* to the Guru and leave it to the Guru to accomplish the rest. The field of this intellectual discussion was a veritable forest, vast and dense, through which no way out could be found. So, as they rambled on without finding their way out, until they came across one who thoroughly knew the forest (a *vanajari*), a forest dweller. The Vanajari, asked them, 'Where are you going into these trackless wood unnecessarily?' He kindly invited them to go with him and take food, which should enable them to continue their journey through the forest. The majority being selfsufficient and independent, the Vanajari's words were not heeded. But the party went into this intellectual wood and lost their way. Again the Vanajari appeared before them,

and showed them how by relying on their own intelligence they had lost their way and gone on the wrong path, and told them that a guiding finger was necessary to show them the proper way. The Vanajari said offer of food was not to be despised, for offer of food was an auspicious sign betokening the coming success in the enterprise. So, he repeated the offer of his hospitality. For a second time the majority decided to reject the offer.

So they continued their rambling in the trackless forest. Hunger seized them all but the unbending three were too proud to change. Baba alone left that company, went to the Vanajari and accepted food and water. That Vanajari was the Guru and enquired of all that they had talked about, and the conclusions they had come to. Baba revealed to him the entire facts. The others did not care to depend on a Guru or a Guide. Baba for himself, he felt that the Guru, and Guru alone, was the thing needed. So saying Baba bowed in reverence to the Guru with faith. The Guru at once put his faith to the test. Baba's description of the test resembled an allegory, and was obviously symbolical, Baba says—

"Then he took me to a well, tied up my legs with a rope, and suspended me, head downwards, from a tree by a side of the well. My head was about three feet off the water, which I could not reach. And my Guru left me there and went away, God knows where. He returned after 4 or 5 hours and asked me how I fared. "In great bliss was my time passed", I answered. The Guru, mightily pleased with me, drew me near him, passed his palm over my head and body and spoke to me tender words dripping with love, and he put me into his school where I entirely forgot my father and mother and all attachments and desires.

"I loved to gaze at him. If he were not there to see, I would not like to have eyes at all. I did not wish to go back. I forgot all other things but the Guru. My life was concentrated in my sight and my sight in him. That was the object of my meditation. In silence I bowed.

"Meanwhile Realisation flashed upon me of itself without effort or study, purely by his grace.

"Guru's grace is our only sadhana. Jnana comes as experience (or in its wake)".

We are now in a position to answer the questions which are sometimes asked about Baba. What school of philosophy did he belong to? Did he uphold the advaitic view that there is only one absolute truth and that everything that we see in the Universe is but the result of Maya, or was he a realist holding that the Seen Universe is the Truth, the Reality? Was he an upholder of Nirguna worship, that is, the worship of the Unseen, the Absolute without attributes, or was he a worshipper of various forms of God? Was he advocating the margas of bhakti or yoga or of karma? But to give a full answer to each of these questions may require many chapters. We shall take the first question regarding Baba's school of philosophy, whether it was pure Suddha Advaita, the Advaitic standpoint of Sankara found in his innumerable works, such as, Vivekachudamani, etc. The one short answer to all questions about Baba is that Baba's complete views and complete nature are totally unknown to any one. No one was with him all through his life, nothing, as Boswell did in the case of Johnson, everything he did or said, or omitted to say or do. But we have fairly large mass of his sayings and doings when he was in the fleshy body, that is, up to 1918. As to his lilas and utterances and deeds, after 1918, we have an equally large, if not larger mass. From these one may attempt to give some answers. But in the first place, it is better to preface our observations with this remark that Baba was everything to everyone. He suited himself to the capacity or circumstances of each.

*Ye yatha mam prabadyante tarns tataiva bhajamyahatn.*

This means, 'In whatever way one surrenders himself to Me, I suit myself to him in that line'. This is the remark of Lord Krishna, that is God.

*Mere babaku marma na janare koimere*

*Sree babaku siddhaavasta*

*Jisku jaisa janare*

This means "None knows the real inwardness of my Baba: Some said he was a Yogi, some a sensualist, some called him a wise man, some a hypocrite, some called him Brahman or God. Baba's state is the Siddha Avasta. Each finds in him what he thinks him to be".

Sri Sai Baba who identified himself with God had the same observation to make. He was treated as the Ishta Devata by many devotees as Rama, Datta, Vittobha, Khandoba, Ganapati and Maruti, and was approached as a great Saint by Hindu philosophers and saints, and as an avalia by Muslims, and as a weird person by the ignorant outsiders. To each he gave the response suitable to him or her. Where a person was absolutely against realistic or dualistic ideas, Baba did not force on him such ideas. Where persons, for instance, held the view that a Guru was unnecessary and did not care to go near him closer and closer, he simply dismissed them with the remark, 'A Guru (to you) is unnecessary. In the case of pure advaitic sets, his role was that of a sympathetic adviser. Many persons holding advaitic views are in practice realistic and advaitic. This applies to millions, especially in Maharashtra as also in the South. Baba found that persons like Upasani Baba belonging to the Uddhava Mutt adhered theoretically to the school of Sankara while following in practice much the same method as Sri Ramanujacharya's followers or Madhvacharya's followers. The worship that they adopted was realistic and dwaitic and they had to build upon it and hoped all the time that at some time, the advaitic goal will be reached. Baba dealt with them, in accordance with their own views.

So, when Upasani Baba approached, Baba guided him, in practice, on lines suitable to his fitness. He had to develop more and more of bhakti to his Ishta Devata for he already held the ideal of advaitic unification, realisation as a distant goal. So, he led him on to bhakti first. Bhakti in his case, as in the case of most others, was bhakti to his Gurudeva treated as identical with his Ishta Devata in accordance with the closing stanza of Swetaswatara Upanishad. He had to develop staunch bhakti and implicit reliance on Sai Baba before he could get any benefit as a sishya. So, Baba revealed to the sishya much of his powers and nature, and enabled him first to admire, and then to love him. He undertook everything on behalf of his Ananta i.e., sealed the sishya marked as his own, undertook all temporal and spiritual obligations on his behalf. Thus he succeeded in preparing the soil for sowing the seeds of spiritual growth. He implanted and increased in him the necessary virtues of Brahmacharya, Satya, and Vairagya,

and thereby prepared him for the position of a Samarta Sadguru. While doing all this, he did not omit to point out in a general way, the ultimate goal. Upasani Baba could not understand how everything could be one, himself, all beings and his God; nor could he tolerate loss of personal identity to merge in the Impersonal Absolute as the goal of man. But that was the school or Mutt to which Upasani Baba by birth belonged. Sai Baba taught him through hints the wonderful truth that all that exists is but a manifestation of the one reality which transcends them. This realisation, according to the Sankara doctrine, is to be reached mainly through *vichara* supported by *vairagya*, *samadhi shatka*, (equanimity, and five other virtues) and *mumukshutva*, i.e., desire for liberation from samsara. So Baba started him on vichara marga also in a rather peculiar way. But first for Vairagya, i.e., for overcoming the desire for wealth and women (Kamini-kanchana) and other lower urges, Baba gave him instruction through visions. He first showed him that there was a Papa purusha or lower element in him and that had to be burnt out. So Baba in a vision enacted the scene of his catching hold of a person standing behind Upasani exactly resembling him but wearing dirty clothes, who was interfering with Upasani's receiving instruction from the Guru. Baba caught hold of him and burnt him up. Upasani was crying out all the while. 'It is me, Baba, you are burning; it is me, Baba, you are burning'. Baba Said, 'No doubt, it is you, but you in the papa purusha form, that is your sinful nature. Unless that is burnt up, how is the grand work which is to be accomplished by our joint endeavours to be achieved?' Baba said that he had burnt out the papa purusha.

To overcome Upasani's attachment to wealth, Sai Baba showed him in a vision that there was some figure exactly like Upasani, seated on a grand pile of wealth, and asked Upasani to see him, and said 'That is you, that is your punya purusha., After seeing that second figure, Upasani asked, 'If the figure you burnt the other day is my papa purusha, and this is my punya purusha, who am I?' This is the vichara or enquiry into the Self, which every true teacher must encourage the sishya to make. Baba used to say occasionally, 'Enquire who we are, where we are, and what we are, etc., and he enbaled Upasani to note that in himself

there was a *papa purusha* and also a *punya purusha*. Therefore, when the question was raised by Upasani himself 'What his Self was', Baba gave the correct hint. That is how he sowed the seed of *vichara*, which was to bear good fruit very much later. Baba gave the explanation, "You are neither the one nor the other, but beyond both; you are neither your *punya* nor your *papa purusha* but beyond both. That which constitutes Me constitutes you, And there he left it. He was simply talking above the head of the sishya who had no ideas on this subject. But long afterwards, when Upasani started Parayana of Avadhuta Gita, wherein these ideas are fully expanded and explained, the seed sown at Shirdi bore rich fruit.

According to true advaita of Sankara, the Jiva talked of as I by Kasinath Upasani was *in essence* the same as Parabrahman, the one underlying Reality which ought to be seen in all manifest things, and which people call Brahman or God. What is it you call God or Brahman? 'That from which everything came and into which everything is going to have laya or merger, is Brahman" and "That Brahman is Yourself. That Brahman has manifested itself as the Universe, and has manifested itself as the Jiva. The Jiva like so many other forces is but a manifestation, the underlying reality being the same in all cases. Descartes, when he said that the whole world was his idea ('I am the thinker of the whole world') did not note this truth, namely, that he, when he talked of himself as a thinking force, was but a manifestation, like the rest of the world, of the one ultimate reality. So, the world is a manifestation, the ego is a manifestation, and that which manifests, namely the Real is "Brahman", and that is what Baba meant when he said 'That which constitutes *me*, (i.e. Brahman) constitutes *you* , This pithy teaching was just delivered, and then the vision closed. It was only remembered by Upasani Baba for very many years that is, till 1936 or so, as something remote from life. It was only about 1936 that the teaching commanded respect and acceptance. Upasani Baba then understood how the Jiva also merges in the Purna Parabrahman, and how real moksha or liberation consists in the Jiva losing its separate identity and imaginary independence and sinking itself into the one absolute, undifferentiated Real.

## CHAPTER II

### Sri Sai Baba & Propaganda (Or Prachar)

The term propaganda has been seriously strained; it obtained a very bad odour during war days. War propaganda meant downright falsehood to serve one's own purposes. Therefore, the term 'propaganda' is disliked very much, and when it is used in connection with prachar for Sai Baba, some people are shocked. However, we might repel the tide of misuse and bad odour in respect of that term and resume the proper use of the word 'propaganda'. Sai prachar and propaganda are exactly the same, and using them in that sense, we shall consider the question whether Sai prachar is to be objected to. This objection is unintelligible to many people. Why should anybody object to Sai becoming known? Sai prachar means Sai getting known. Why anybody should object to this, passes one's understanding. If Sai is a great soul, if he has done good to hundreds and thousands of people in certain parts of the country, why should not that be known to a larger number of people in a larger number of places? If that is proper, prachar is the means. It is not only proper but desirable, nay, it may even be a duty, at least in the case of those who are fitted to do prachar and to whom prachar has become a *sadhana* by Baba's grace. So we shall just for one short moment note what the implication of prachar is.

The implication of prachar is that someone who is aware of Sai's nature and Sai's doings, and the great benefits derived thereby, goes about communicating to other people who are not aware of them the facts which are within his knowledge. *Prima facie* there should be no objection to this, but on the other hand one should be thankful that there is Sai prachar. But objections have been raised, and first they have been raised by those who are asked to give out their experiences for the purpose of prachar. To many people experiences are of a special and personal nature dealing with delicate matters, and, therefore, their disclosure is not easy. In some cases, Baba has objected to people disclosing their experiences, especially to outsiders who may have no regard for the same. That was in times long gone by, and, at present, the esteem for Sai Baba being so widely prevalent. the chances of one's communicating experiences to

strangers who will scoff at them, are not great. Still if there are people who are merely scoffers, even for propagandists it would be well not to open their mouths and start propaganda in the midst of such company. Sometimes it may happen that scoffers at propaganda might turn to be men who came to scoff but remained to pray.

In this connection, we may note what happened to one Mr. Bala Saheb Bhate. He was a Mamlatdar at Kopergaon with numerous friends, who were Sai Bhaktas. They were living at various places, and whenever they wanted to go to Shirdi to see Sai Baba, they had to go by train to Kopergaon, and at Kopergaon they would see their friend, Bala Saheb Bhate. Bala Saheb Bhate would ask them what they had come for, and when they said they had come to see Sai Baba at Shirdi, he would scoff at them and say, 'You graduates and big people with education, training and civilization, you go and call on an uncultured rustic, a poor, worthless fakir, and is it to this your degree and University position have come?' In that style he would go on, and if they asked him to go and see Sai Baba for himself so that he might correct his opinion of Baba, he would scoff even that proposal, and he thought it *infra dig* of his position to go and see Sai Baba living at Shirdi, though Shirdi was legitimately within his own taluk and jurisdiction. It so chanced on one occasion that when he had gone to visit Rahata, the head village of Shirdi, he happened to visit Shirdi. Then it struck him that he might see Sai Baba. The moment he went and saw Sai Baba, Baba's wonderful power gripped him. He could not get away from Sai Baba for an hour or two. When people reminded him that it was time for him to get away, he said, 'Yes, wait, wait,' and went on looking at Baba for one or two hours. The fascination of Baba was most extraordinary. He had gone with the opinion that Baba was something below his notice (because he was a man of importance, not only a mamlatdar but one highly thought of by the Collector, and one who thought very highly of his own qualities and abilities). With such an opinion up to that time he had gone there. Perhaps an undercurrent was started by Baba within Bhate's mind that he had been reviling, abusing, and considering low a person about whom he knew nothing. He thought that if that person were proved

to be really a wonderful and great Saint with weird powers, then his action was a great sin and would badly react on himself. This undercurrent might have been working in him to change his tone. When he went before Baba, Baba attracted him to himself.

Baba had no difficulty at all in seizing his (Bhate's) mind and filling it with fear and remorse. He had to make a right-about-turn in his own mind, and he suddenly conceived a great regard and esteem for Baba. From that moment onwards, he used to pay frequent visits to Shirdi. Finally he actually made up his mind to quit his appointment and remain with Baba. People reminded him that he had a family to support, and that it was not proper for him to give up his employment. Even Baba asked him not to give up service. But his attachment was so great that he would not care for the consequences and he sent up his resignation. The Collector thought that he might give him a year's leave, though he was not entitled to leave, on the ground that he had been caught up by the fascination of a mad fakir, and, therefore, deserved consideration. But Bhate would not change his mind. Finally, even though he was not entitled to get anything from Government, the Collector enabled him to get a compassionate gratuity on the score that in the course of his duties, he fell under the clutches of a mad fakir, and therefore, was unable to continue his duties any further, as though it was sickness that seized upon him. Thus, a person like Bala Saheb Bhate, who began with violent aversion to Baba, was finally drawn to, and became a very ardent devotee of Baba and derived great benefit thereby till his death.

Thus we see that merely because there are some scoffers, we should not avoid mentioning Sai Baba, and the great work that he is even now doing for people. The effect and value of propaganda will depend on circumstances. Generally, prachar is undoubtedly good. Incidents like the above might be quoted about others also. On principle there is absolutely nothing wrong in publishing and broadcasting Sai's great merits. This was not at first properly understood, and leading gentlemen, the trustees of the Shirdi Sai Sansthan, set their faces deliberately against all prachar, thinking especially that it was wrong on

principle. It was about 1935 that the broadcasting of Baba's good qualities in 'Sunday Times' was started by the 'Southern Swami' who was pulled by Baba to himself through Upasani. When this work was going on in 1940 Baba suddenly thrust large sums of money into the hands of the Southern Swami and the work gained ground. But suddenly just a handful of the influential people amongst the Sai Sansthan set their faces against propaganda and published in a number of language newspapers in Bombay State that the Southern Swami was not to be trusted, and that he was doing propaganda for his own private purposes, and that propaganda was never favoured by Baba. All these have since been found to be incorrect even by the Shirdi Sai Sansthan and in their later publication by Gunaji they have practically withdrawn their aspersions. So far as their aspersions on the Southern Swami go, there is Baba to look after the Swami and his name.

But so far as the Swami's propaganda is concerned, it might be mentioned that Sai Baba has shown that it is he that carries on the propaganda and really not the Swami. This truth was forced upon the Swami in a number of ways. Once when he went to a village near Vellore, a child, only then months old, was shown to him, and it was mentioned that for 8 months the child had fits, and the chances of its survival appeared to be very poor. People wanted the Swami to bless. Swami took up some *udhi* of Baba, and, putting it on the child, said, 'By Baba's Grace this child would never again have fits'. And from that time onwards the child had no more fits. So Baba himself had worked a miracle or *chamatkar*, and that converted the whole of that village into Sai Bhaktas.

A Similar incident occurred at Kakinada. There was a lady with hysteria. It was thought to be a very hopeless case. But this Swami was invited and the Swami, after offering *Karpura Arati* to Baba, gave the *arati* to the lady, and assured her that Baba, being her mother, would keep her from hysterical attacks thereafter. She was practically free from further attacks so long as she was in Kakinada, and even later she had only very few and mild attacks. She had also derived great benefits. This fact spread the name of Sai Baba far and wide in all the places where she was living and thus Baba's propaganda was really carried on by Baba himself. That was the truth which Swami had to mention, but some

people thought that it was a piece of bragging on the part of the Swami that Baba was working through him. But now, more than ever, the Swami has got clear proof that everything which was called his own work was really Sai's own work, including the writing of the articles and other things and the other means employed by him for prachar. As is found in Baba's Sahasranamam, prachar is the work allotted to Das Ganu and Narasimhaswami by Sai Baba himself and is looked after by Sai Baba himself. Thus one important step which at least Sai devotees should not condemn, is Sai prachar by Swami and Das Ganu.

Above all, the recent happenings in Coimbatore, Ramachandrapuram and Totapalli hills, have shown that Baba is carrying on propaganda himself by working miracles in a most unexpected fashion. There are persons who say 'Sai Baba is dead, and, why do puja for him? Why do you preach about dead Gurus and not living Gurus? Why do you talk about Sai Baba at all?' These questions become absurd when people get to know of what is being done in the three places mentioned above. At Coimbatore, Sai suddenly appears as a serpent and stays with people for 17 hours receiving worship, receiving naivedya, and never harming any one, and inspiring every one with confidence and courage that Sai Baba might be approached even though he comes in the form of a serpent. At Ramachandrapuram (Godavari District) he showered messages and inscriptions on such a large and liberal scale that people were simply dumbfounded. When the Joint Registrar of Co-operative Societies goes to Ramachandrapuram and offers a huge rose garland (*Nila Malai*) consisting of hundreds of flowers, on each petal of each flower of the garland, the words 'Om Sai' appear. This is stunning proof that Sai is living, that Sai responds to prayer, and that Sai Baba wishes that all should come to know of his glory and benefit thereby, especially because once they see that Sai is living and answering prayers, and is helpful, vast masses, hundreds, thousands, and lakhs of people will get Sai faith, and that will build up their future. Thus the best answer that we can now give to the objection to Sai prachar is that Sai Baba himself is doing prachar over and over again, especially in places like those mentioned above, Totapalli Shanti Asram being the most recent one.

## CHAPTER III

### Baba's Moral Teachings

Was Baba a teacher of morals and of Moksha Marga? This is hard to answer. Up to the last, Baba concealed his greatness and his nature and even his activities from vulgar gaze. It is the chosen few, the Ankitas, that benefited from him, who discovered that Baba was a teacher, and the highest form of teacher and trainer<sup>1</sup>. But as they mostly maintained secrecy, the world wondered at Baba, and many were asking, and are even now asking sometimes derisively, what Baba could teach, and what his cult is which is not widespread to-day. A District Magistrate before whom S.B. Dhumal (Pleader of Nasik) appeared in a criminal appeal, and whose mind Baba influenced so as to make him give verdict in favour of a Sai devotee, overriding all forms, conventions and procedure, asked 'What does Baba teach?' This was about 1911 when no books on Baba had been written. Even pamphlets were hardly available and the world had no conception at all of Baba's works, teaching, or cult. Dhumal's answer was, 'His teaching would be suited to the individual approaching him and the District Magistrate must himself go to Sai Baba to learn his teaching'. But the Magistrate was not sufficiently serious to approach Baba and get his teaching. Similarly there are many light-hearted people asking about Baba's cult and teaching. To all these the best answer that should be given is that they should get serious enough, unlike the District Magistrate mentioned above, to learn it and to make an effort to approach his bhaktas, and read the literature about Sai Baba. A dip into the History or the Gospel of Sai Baba or Sai Satcharitra might reveal a portion of Baba. But most of our readers might not be prepared to make a detailed study of such big books on Sai Baba, and, therefore, it is necessary to answer the above question briefly and indicate in a few words what might be called Baba's teaching or cult as the term is loosely employed,

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<sup>1</sup> *Jo saducha ankita Jeeva Jialci Tyacha use 8tiara Niranjanala CArti Song*), i.e.. the burdens of the person marked out as his own by the Sadguru are borne by that *Samartha Sadguru*.

Baba was not really starting any cult. Cult implies that it is something narrow and not applicable to the Universe. Baba was just a highly gifted person with numerous divine qualities, especially in his contacts with those anxiously approaching him each grasping some particular truth or aspect of Baba. It is only when we put together the contact and the results of contacts of the tens of thousands that met Baba, during the 50 or 60 years of his life at Shirdi, that anything like a fairly full account of his teachings or trainings can be obtained. Without attempting or professing to reveal the entire teaching we shall just select a few salient features of Baba's teachings, and the reader may peruse other books or even the earlier portion of this book more carefully to discover Baba's essential teaching more fully.

When the author (Sri B.V.N. Swami) was staying in Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa's Ashram, the President of the Ashram once declared that he could not understand how Sai Baba went on like a juggler performing miracles and what the use of all that was, and what Baba could be supposed to be teaching. He also asked what Baba's marga might be. This was about 1936 or 1937. Then the Swami was so puzzled, he made a mental appeal to Baba that light should be given to him to answer these questions. Then the thought occurred to him that he should write about Baba in Tamil, his mother-tongue and avoid English which alone he used in the articles he had so far written about Sai Baba in 1936 in 'Sunday Times'. As he proceeded with the work in Tamil of the life of Sai Baba, thoughts were rearranged and aspects of Baba were perceived in a harmonious connection, and then the truth gradually dawned upon the Swami that Baba was a teacher of the highest sort and a trainer also, and not merely a teacher by utterances, but a Bhagavatottama, a Samartha moulding the completely dedicated and surrendered sishya so as to turn the sishya's soul into his (Guru's) own likeness. "*Apana Sarika Karitat tatkal*", — That is, The Sadguru turns the sishya into his own likeness immediately', says Tukaram. This process of Baba involves the full application of all his Samarta Sadguru powers, all the yoga powers inherent in his divine nature. Chamatkars would only be utilised as part and parcel of the process of shaping the sishya into the Guru's likeness.

As for Baba's margas, the answer became patent from considering Baba's own words as to what his teaching was. When one Uddhavesa Bua appeared before him, Baba told him to read the purana in which Baba had spoken to Uddhavesa Bua, and in which he was still speaking to him. Bua could not find out what that purana could be. Baba asked him to go and fetch the book that was being read at the wada. That was Ekanath's XI Skanda of Srimad Bhagavata. Baba suddenly inserted his finger into the middle of the book and asked Uddhavesa to look into it, for there as Sri Krishna he had already taught Uddhava of the Dwapara Yuga and again through the same as Sai Baba was now teaching the same truths to this Uddhavesa Bua of the Kali Yuga. The Ekadasa Skanda is mostly Krishna-Uddhava samvadha or Uddhava Gita, as it is called. So, he discovered that Baba was the same as Sri Krishna. '*Main Allahum*' denotes that fact, *Brahmavit Brahmaiva bhavathi* This means. 'The Knower of Brahman is Brahman'. This is an authoritative aphorism of Hinduism, and is a patent psychological truth. With the aid of all this, the Swami discovered the answers to the posers and conundrums put to him. What is Baba's teaching? It is the same teaching in his Gitas, the Arjuna Gita and the Uddhava Gita. What are his margas? The same margas as are advocated in the above two. That is, practically all the margas. All roads lead to Rome. 'All margas lead to God' is the object of all teaching. When the question is asked. "What is Baba's mission?", the answer must be given that a person having one and only one mission is having a very narrow existence.

Sai Baba, Sri Krishna, Sri Rama, are all divinely gifted or perfected souls and expressions of divinity transforming every one who comes into contact with their divine personality especially those who are drawn through Rinanubandha by their divinity and that is the purpose or mission of their lives. So, Baba has not one mission, but a hundred missions. Protecting the good (virtuous), punishing or reforming the wicked, establishing Dharma (Virtue) or its hold on the people, are the functions of divine personalities, and Baba was performing all these functions. A mission may come in as a part of these functions. Studying these Gitas one sees that there is no meaning in asking for any one marga expounded

by the Divine Person. Saints expound all the margas and find which marga or combination of which margas would suit each approaching devotee, and give the same to him. Thus Baba adopted every marga but in particular one may note that the predominance in his methods was neither for ritual nor for

Vedic study, but for living in consonance with the Supreme manifestation of Divinity in himself. His mission is to help every one, that means, of course, everyone capable of benefiting, not persons who come in an unreceptive mood like the Valambi Station Master. He quoted occasionally his master's or Guru's behest that "as he had received liberally from his master he must similarly distribute liberally amongst those that approached him". Baba was distributing not merely wealth, worldly relief and comforts, but also spiritual gifts and spiritual blessings to all and sundry that were capable of receiving those benefits. Baba once quoted in the presence of Lele Sastri,

*Apichel siiduracharo bhajate mam ananyabhak*

*Sadhureva sa mantavyah samyak vyavastito hi sah.*

This means, 'Even the most wicked, if he concentrates on or worships ME, the Lord, then he must be deemed to be a Sadhu or a good person. He has begun rightly (and he would soon turn into pure ways and attain spiritual heights)'.

Thus Baba checked vice and weakness in men, giving them purity, strength, etc., and enabling them to rise spiritually. Baba has benefited a large number in this way, but of these we may give a few instances to show how 'Suduracharah', very wicked persons, were benefited by him morally and spiritually. One D.V. Sambhare had the misfortune of serving under a master given to drink, and himself was getting into the grip of the vice. Baba once appeared to him in a dream, sat on his chest, and told him, 'Once or twice will I give you warning. If no heed is taken of the warning, then I will let you have your fate'. The man noticed that he should mend his ways, and swore that he would not touch liquor. However, when his master was sending away his children from India, he gave a feast, and, of course, drinks played an important part. The glasses went round. When the master came to fill up the glass of D.V. Sambhare, Sambhare (being afraid to mention the name of Sai Baba) said 'My

doctor advised me against drink'. The master in a jovial mood said that his doctor also gave him the same advice, but he honoured the advice more in the breach than in the observance. He asked Sambhare to drink. It was a perilous situation. But suddenly by Baba's grace all the electric lights went out, and the whole hall was plunged in darkness. The Master went out to see the cause of the failure of lights. Meanwhile, Sambhare's neighbour obliged Sambhare by himself draining away the whole cup placed before Sambhare. The lights suddenly reappeared, and when the master came, he found that the glass placed before Sambhare was empty and he imagined that Sambhare had taken the drink. This is how Baba saved one of his bhaktas from the temptation of drink.

Another person whom Baba saved similarly from this strong vice of drinking was a goldsmith's son, whose health and even soul were getting seriously imperilled by his increasing addiction to drink. He was advised to go to Baba of Shirdi. He started for Shirdi; even during the railway journey he found his bad habit was losing its hold on him, and when he came to Shirdi the desire for drink was not there. Baba then blessed him and sent him back, and for a good time, he was free from the vice. But this goldsmith had a family God, who wanted drink, and the leavings of the Gods, the Prasad', had to be taken by all the devotees, and thus, he once again got into the old monster's clutch. The habit then grew, and ultimately, the man was ruined by over-drinking.

About other evil habits also Baba has rendered very interesting service. Sri Ramaswami Iyengar, a doctor, accompanied his patient Rao Sahib Subbiah Chetty to Shirdi. There the doctor vowed that he would not take betel and nut (of which he was very fond) after visiting Shirdi. In spite of that vow, the desire for betel was strong upon him. As he sat in a bullock cart along with Subbiah Chetti, the sight of Subbiah Chetti's betels in his hand was too powerful, and the doctor ate some. This man, who had forty years been chewing betel. i.e., betel, nut, and chunam found on this occasion that the betels had burnt up the entire mucous membrane of his mouth. Thereafter for 15 days he could not take pepper water or eat even ordinary food. His vow was thus enforced on him through physical disability by Baba. In the case of Subbiah Chetti himself, he had vowed that he

would give up his habit of taking quids. When he returned from Shirdi, he asked his servant to bring him tobacco. When it was brought and placed before him it looked to him like dung. He felt a repulsion for it and asked the servant to take it away. Thus Baba strengthened the inside - the mentality - of Rao Sahib and enabled him to observe the vow.

Baba is not only a teacher but a controller from within - the ever-watching Guardian angel. One might easily remember how he played the part of the University Proctor in the case of Rao Bahadur H.V. Sathe. He had by mistake and carelessness allowed himself to visit the house of a lady with bad reputation, and was closeted with her under circumstances which made his moral ruin imminent. The door was apparently closed. But suddenly it was thrown open, and on the threshold Baba's figure was seen making gestures to Sathe, "What! You have come all this way to your Guru and now you are descending to Hell! What an excellent course!" Like a thief caught in the act, H.V. Sathe felt greatly ashamed and left that lady's house never to visit it again. Similarly his attempt to beat his wife, with a stick for her refusal to accompany him to see the land recently acquired was the occasion for Baba's acting again the watchful guardian angel. Megha was sent by Baba to Sathe, and he came running to Sathe's quarters saying, 'Baba wants you,' just when Sathe lifted up his whip to strike his wife. Thus Sathe was saved from the sin of cruelty on this occasion as he had been saved from the sin of sexual immorality on the previous occasion.

Baba's helps of a similar sort were rendered to many other devotees, even who never saw him before Mahasamadhi. Baba is still exercising his Proctorship and still guiding and warning people. But there is one disadvantage. Baba was dealing with large numbers of devotees. It was not possible to make the entire lot moral and properly behaved, in spite of all the efforts of Baba to correct them. In B.C, &S. 153, Baba Said 'I have been considering long and thinking day and night. All are thieves. But we have to deal with them. I prayed to God night and day for their improvement. God delays and does not approve of the (i. e. my) attitude or grant the prayer. I will wait for a month or two and then see. But living or dead, I will have what I have been praying for. I will not go to Teli or Vani nor

beg of them. People are not good and devoted. They are unsettled in mind. A few friends will gather and talk divine wisdom, and sit and contemplate.' Again in 1918, he said 'People have got bad and give trouble. They are pestering me for money. Moreover, they become shameless. Now I am disgusted'. Once in such a disgusted mood, he went to Nimgam and told the zamindar of the disgusting way in which devotees behaved at Shirdi and added that he wanted to leave Shirdi.

In spite of all this, Baba had to stick on to his place, for Rinanubandha required him there, and he slowly and gradually developed some persons, who would mend others and carry on his work. He told Upasani Maharaj to stay for four years with him. But that Maharaj could not find himself strong enough to continue for more than three years and so left Shirdi without even taking permission of Baba. Baba had told him, "You and I together have to work and improve people and hence the papa purusha in you has been driven out". Baba wanted Upasani Maharaj to develop along lines marked out by him. But unfortunately, Upasani Maharaj took his course at a tangent from Sai Baba's and went off on his own ideas, which were so wholly at variance with Baba's. Baba had to put up with it. Thus Baba did not find all his plans for the moral improvement of others that came to him quite successful. Yet he did his best. He kept several people to Brahmacharya for the required period, namely, Tatya, Dhumal, etc. He regulated the lives of those who wholly surrendered to him. Yet, the work of moral regeneration was not and could never be complete. While doing service, incidentally the work of conveying moral teachings was carried on by Baba, and he gave occasional talks about morality. But we may sum up the whole in the way in which he himself put it to Shama, namely, 'Behave properly', and the way in which he put it to Rao Sahib Galwankar, 'Behave with integrity and probity'. This advice is represented by the Sanskrit stanza.

*Slokardhena pravakshyami yad uktam granthakotibhih*

*Paropakarah punyaya papaya pampeedanam*

This means, 'In half a stanza I shall tell you the teaching which has been set forth in crores of moral books. That is benefiting humanity is punya (merit). Hurting others is sinful'. This is a teaching that even children, and sometimes creatures

like dogs also, can understand. Baba expected people to act up to this teaching. What other teachings he gave, we shall set out below, at least in part.

When a great Saint leading a perfectly pure life as a Samartha Sadguru and helping thousands that came to him in the course of about half a century on their way to God is to be described, his utterances are sure to cover practically the entire field of ethics and spirituality, and it is neither possible nor desirable to make anything like an attempt to give a full account of his moral teachings. It will be enough for us to note a few more of the prominent teachings that came from him to benefit his immediate devotees that have revealed their experiences to us. This is specially so because Baba's influencing his devotees was not and is not mainly by any sort of express teaching.

He was moulding his children, as he called his devotees, from inside and he used not merely words but also his gaze, his touch, and even his aura or the will power to remove undesirable tendencies and influences and replace them by useful and holy ones. An excellent instance of such exercise by him is the case of Bala Saheb Bhate.

Bala Saheb Bhate was a brilliant graduate employed as Mamlatdar or Tahsildar at Kopergaon from 1904 onwards. Many of his friends and acquaintances, from near Bombay especially having to go to Shirdi, met him on the way at Kopergaon, and when they declared their object, were jeered at by him, and when they desired him to try himself, he was laughing at them to scorn and would not care to visit. But in 1909, he was actually visiting Shirdi - one might say accidentally except for the fact that Baba's wonderful influence was unseen; and what appears as accident might really well be Baba's pulling. In 1909, when he visited Baba, he just sat before him and looked at Baba. The very look of Baba pierced and transfixed him. He sat on for half an hour, then for one hour, and when reminded by those near him that it was time to move away, had not the slightest inclination to move away but remained, and it was with difficulty that he was pulled away from Baba. Here is a case of what we may term to be fascination. The person whom he loathed and held in high contempt had exercised a fascination over his mind that he could not overcome. He was so

deeply attached to him that he stayed another day, and a third day also at Shirdi though he had no official business there. He made up his mind that, his life's goal being Baba, he should stay with him and that for ever. Wife, child, office, property, all these were simply blacked out of his mind, and the one thing dominated his mental vision was Baba. When at last he was compelled to go, he soon came back again and was thus frequently at Shirdi. At last he made up his mind to give up his office. He remained at Shirdi without even applying for leave of absence. He forgot his official and family or social interests so much so that Baba had to tell some of his official friends like Nana Chandorkar to write on his behalf an application for leave. He had become absolutely indifferent to the office which was till then the be-all and end-all of his existence. In fact, he was the pet of the Collector, as he turned out the best work in the whole of the district. All that went for nothing, and Baba held him by an iron grip. On the fifth day of his stay, Baba put *aageru* cloth (*kashayu* cloth) over his shoulders, and after that his change of heart was complete. This is what he himself in 1913 told O.K. Gurde, who was Sub Judge at Khamgaon. a friend of his. Here, in this case we cannot say that this man's obstinacy and materialistic outlook were overcome by any moral teaching. There was no teaching here. There was only the inner influence changing his heart.

Such moral changes were so frequently effected by Baba that it is difficult for us to enumerate them or say which of them is important. The important moral work of Baba was not orally uttered. Even now it is so. It is not the experiences of devotees that matter most to bhaktas. Even today it is his *inner* working that counts in the improvement and building up of the devotee. His presence, his gaze, his touch had all their effect. Narayan Ashram, a Sanyasi, mentions that Baba had four or more ways of touching people's heads. Sometimes he barely seemed to touch. Sometimes he seemed to press out something from the head. Sometimes he made passes without touching the head. Each of these had its own peculiar effect as intended by Baba. Baba's gaze is described by several devotees. Mrs. Sadasiva Tarkhad says that one felt that Baba's gaze was reading one through and through, as nothing could be concealed from him. Baba

was not merely in one's heart, but in every particle of one's body. That is what one felt when Baba was gazing. This power seems to extend even to the eyes in Baba's *picture* kept in the Dwarakamayee. The Pleader of Thana, Sri G.B. Datar, once visited Baba, but being worldly minded, got frightened at Baba's demand for dakshina and remembered that Narayan Maharaj used to return dakshinas given to him along with sugarcandy. But the same Datar, in 1931 visited Baba's Mandir, after reading Upasani Lilamrita giving an account of Sai Baba. When he entered the Dwarakamayee and gazed at Baba's eyes in the picture kept there, he felt the powerful influence of Baba's eyes even in the picture, and declared that Sai Baba alone was his Master and Guru. Many others gazing at Baba's eyes for purposes of trance or dhyana can vouch for similar powerful influence of Baba on the moral and spiritual characteristics of his devotee through his gaze.

Baba in many ways sowed the seed of morals and spirituality in the hearts of those approaching him, and sometimes almost imperceptibly. Whenever he rendered any worldly help, that help was accompanied by a spiritual seed sowing, and the beneficiary remembered Baba with faith, love and admiration for his power, guidance, and kindness. These thoughts were the seeds from which a huge tree of faith would grow up later on and Baba who sowed the seeds mostly, watered and manured his plant, and in many a case, beginning with worldly benefit, the devotee got on higher and higher spiritual levels. This cannot be called moral teaching but only moral elevation. But Baba's moral teachings have a very wide range. And, before closing this chapter, we may just set out a few of his teachings with perhaps an incident or two for illustrating the same.

Baba's teachings are so common that when set out, they may look like copy book maxims, and some may wonder why these should be set out at all, as everyone knows these moral teachings. What Baba taught was not something new and strange. It is the old, old truths of morality and spirituality that have to be rubbed into each soul and lived up to, and, therefore, Baba would place these truths before the devotee when the appropriate occasion offered itself. Anyhow, in order that a curious reader, wanting to know what sort of teachings Baba's were, might get some satisfaction, we shall give below a few of his teachings and

hope that the reader will not stop with mere curiosity but really proceed to read, digest, absorb, and live upto them and make them part of himself. For instance, about contentment and surrender, Baba used to say, 'God is great. He is the Supreme Master.' (The Arabic equivalent of it is "*Allah Malik*", which phrase was constantly on Baba's lips). Baba also said occasionally, when people thought that he was great, 'How great is God? No one can compare with him. God creates, supports and destroys. His lila (sport) is inscrutable. Let us be content to remain as he makes us, to submit our wills to his.' This is the most important doctrine, the doctrine of submission and surrender. Baba Said, '*Allah Rakega Vahisa Rahena*'. This means 'As God places us, let us remain.' Baba also said, Take what comes. Be contented and cheerful. Never worry. Not a leaf moves but by His consent and will. We should be honest, upright and virtuous. We must distinguish right from wrong. We must each attend to his own duty. But we must not be obsessed by egotism and fancy that we are independent causes of action. God is that Actor. We must recognise his independence and our dependence on Him, and see all acts as His. If we do so, we shall be unattached and free from karmic bondage'.

This is the most essential point in all religions. Baba's whole life was governed by it. He appeared to be ever active. But throughout he knew that God was acting, and he was merely an instrument in the hands of God. He said at times, 'God has agents everywhere, and they have vast powers; and I also have vast powers.' But *abhimana*, the idea that I am doing, has to be completely suppressed in order that one may really have spiritual elevation, peace and happiness.

Another important thing for peace and happiness is love of all creation. Baba's moral teachings were conveyed by his own life and activity. Baba loved all creatures, and the underlying motive of every act of his was love towards all human beings and all creatures. Baba said, 'Love all creatures. Do not fight with any. Do not retaliate nor scandalise any. When any one talks ill of you, that is, against you, pass on unperturbed. His words cannot pierce into your body. Others' acts will affect them alone and not you.' One is very strongly reminded of

the teachings of the great Greek stoic teacher Epictetus, when reading these words. As for activity, Baba was ever active and never idle and His advice was, 'Do not be idle. Work, Utter God's name. Read scriptures'. Baba's advice was always simple and capable of being accepted and acted upon by even persons of the meanest capacity and women and children. He told Chandrabai Borkar, 'We should not harbour envy, rivalry, or combative disposition towards others. If others hate us, let us simply take to Nama Japa and avoid their company'. He told the child Bapu Rao N. Chandorkar 'Hearken to the words of your parents. Help your mother in her tasks. Speak the truth and truth alone'. Baba's regard for truth was so well known. He had no interest, nothing in him, to make him swerve from the path of truth and rectitude. He occasionally had to impress on people like Mrs. M.W. Pradhan the virtue of meekness. The lady had a bit of temper. Baba told her, 'If anyone talks ten words at us, if we reply at all, let us reply with one word. Do not quarrel, retaliate, or bandy words with anyone. Do not give tit for tat'.

Baba's Guru had implanted in him from the earliest stage '*Nishta* and *Saburi*'. '*Saburi*' is patience and perseverance with cheerfulness. Baba had to press this home on some, especially those who were of an impatient nature. Uddhavesa Bua of Omkar on the Narmada banks came to him and asked him at once, 'Where is my Moksha Guru and how is he to be got?' Baba counselled patience, and said, 'Wait for five years, and you will know. How can you swallow at one gulp an entire loaf? Wait for five years and then see'.

As for the need for perseverance, that had to be driven home to persons with weak faith. There was a Prarthana Samajist who went to Baba, having caught up some little faith. However, on his way, before he saw Baba, he had a discussion with someone else about the Gita definition of *Sthitha Prajna* mentioned in Chapter II, verses 48-52, and wanted to know whether Baba had the characteristics of a *Sthitha Prajna*. This discussion unsettled his mind, and when he went to Baba, his mind was in a thoroughly disturbed state. Baba noticed at once his unsettled mind and told Shama, 'Take him and tell him something (of experiences of devotees)'. Then Shama took him to his wada and learning what

happened, he gave him this valuable advice, namely, (1) Despise irresponsible and uninformed people's talk, and (2) place your mind at Baba's feet, and then all will be safe. Have Saburi, and you will be safe. When they returned to Baba, Baba told the Samajist that he should follow Shama's advice.

Baba insisted on harmony amongst his followers. He said, 'If you avoid rivalries and bickerings, God will protect you'. This is specially valuable for promoting Hindu-Muslim relations of harmony amongst Baba's bhaktas and their surroundings. Baba also said 'Return not evil. Return good for evil. Others' words cannot harm you'.

Baba preached industry and patience. Baba said, 'Life is lived in vain if no yoga, yaga, tapas, or jnana be achieved'. He asked a devotee, 'Will you sit idle merely eating your food? Have Saburi, that is patience and courage'. Baba set the example himself of tapas. He kept awake the whole night lying on a small narrow plank making Namasmaraṇ, keeping his eyes open, and holding his mind in trance, telling Mahlsapathy to sit by his side and place his hands on Baba's heart. If Baba fell asleep, Mahlsapathy should wake him up. It was by such rigorous and extraordinary vigils that Baba got grey and also by the amount of pesterings he got from visitors of all sorts, desirable and undesirable. Baba's advice to sadhakas like Abdul, his constant attendant, were special and not applicable to all. He told Abdul, 'Eat very little. Do not go in for a variety of eatables. A single sort or dish will suffice. Do not sleep much. Have dhyana on what is read. Think of Allah, Hari Nama, Hari Nama, Hari Nama'. This applies to every serious minded devotee who wishes to reach God. Baba also rebuked scandal-mongering, himsa to animals, and other forms of irreligious behaviour. About scandal-mongering. he knew who was scandalising whom and where. When in S.M. Naik's place scandalising was going on and when Mathuradas came to Dwarakamayee. Baba at once asked. 'What was Naik saying?' The man felt ashamed of the scandal. Baba then said, "The good and the wicked alike come here. Why draw their frailties and foibles to public notice by depicting them?" When Dixil was in his own quarters scandalising Jesus Christ, and then came to Baba, Baba would not allow him to approach him till he repented.

Once there was a devotee at Shirdi reviling other devotees behind their back. Baba came along and met that man near the Lendi, and pointed out to him a pig eating human dung. Baba showed him the pig and said, 'What is it doing?' That man said, 'It is eating filth'. Baba said, 'You see with what gusto the pig is gorging itself on nightsoil. But we feel it disgusting. This is exactly how you behave. People fret and fume against their own brethren and kinsmen to their hearts' content. Human birth is obtained after much (punya) merit and after obtaining it, is a man to go to Shirdi and commit moral suicide?'

About cruelty to creatures, Baba was ever watching his devotees, wherever they might be and, whenever they might be indulging in such cruelty. Mahlsapathy had hit a sickly dog near his own place, and when he came to Baba, Baba told him, 'There is in the village a bitch sickly like me, and everyone is hitting it. Mahlsapathy felt that Baba was hitting him. Mrs. Khaparde, a very orthodox lady, was cooking her food at the Wada, and then a dog came near. She flung burning fuel at it. Later on she went to Baba and said 'Baba, come to my house for dinner.' Baba then said, 'Yes, I come and you fling burning fuel at me.' Baba's advice on cruelty to creatures might sometimes seem to be extraordinary. When Dixit asked Baba, 'The serpent kills so many people, and so, should not one kill the serpent whenever one sees it?' Baba answered, 'No. The serpent will never kill us unless it is ordered by God to kill us. And if God has so ordered it, we cannot escape. So, do not kill the snake'. Ever afterwards Dixit avoided killing snakes, scorpions, bugs, fleas, and other creatures. Once a mad dog bit a small dog, and the small dog was thought to be rabid, and big dogs were running away from the small dog. The villagers wanted to club the small dog. It ran through the streets and sought sanctuary behind Baba at the Dwarakamayee. The villagers wanted Baba to drive the dog out so that they might kill it. But Baba told them to get out and saved the creature. After all, the dog proved not to be rabid. Similar instructions given by Baba might take numerous pages to relate. So, we might as well stop this chapter about moral teachings with one quotation, which we copy from Sai Satcharitra.

"Unless there is some relationship or connection nobody goes anywhere. If any men or creatures come to you, do not discourteously drive them away, but receive them well and treat them with due respect. 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 at-one-ment is not possible. "*Allah Malik*" i.e. God is the sole proprietor, nobody else is our protector. His method of work is extraordinary, invaluable, and inscrutable. His will will be done and He will show us the way and satisfy our hearts' desires. It is on account of Rinanubandha (former relationship) that we have come together. Let us love and serve each other and be happy. He who attains the supreme goal of life is immortal and happy, all others merely exist and merely breathe."

In closing this chapter on Moral Teachings, it is once again necessary to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that Baba did not profess to be a teacher, and to more than 99 per cent of his visitors he did not even appear to be a teacher and was chiefly a granter of wishes. But all the same, he was a powerful instiller of principles and virtue into the hearts of those capable of receiving such impress. The one most important fact to remember about morals and Baba is that Baba was the embodiment of all virtues and Baba did nothing which he did not preach. In himself all the virtues were the efflorescence of the central root in him with which he began as a little child, namely, love for the Guru, love that knows no bounds of time, place, or circumstance, and love that sacrifices anything and everything at its altar. Gratitude, service, equality, justice,

consideration and so many other good qualities that were in him and taught by him were the direct issue of this love, and could not have all been sustained without this love. This is the central point to remember about Baba. This enables the sishya to get more and more like unto the Guru, and by constant meditation on him become the soul of the Guru. "*Apana Sarika Karitat Tatkal*" says Tukaram of Gurus. The sishya grows in love, absorbs the love from the Guru, and returns it with all his soul and body, and does not consider himself as anything except as the lover and the beloved of the Guru. Thus he attains moral perfection, spiritual perfection, perfection of siddhis and perfection of every sort This is the natural result of Baba's moral teachings.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **What is God?**

This, to some, appears a very childish question to ask, and they promptly retort, 'Is there any one who does not know about God?' But after apologising, if we are again to press them to answer the question, then they begin to flutter and flounder, and find that what first seemed easy is certainly not easy, but one of the hardest tasks. The truth is that the God idea is as widely prevalent as air is in the world. But, when one tries to grasp it, and set it forth, either in the mind or heart or in words, with some definiteness, the task proves impossible. The truth is that God is a peripheral idea and not a central idea. Things like charcoal, silver, food or pencil, represent material objects, which normally appear before our eyes and our minds. As Leibnitz has put it, perfect knowledge is possible about them and all the circumstances about place, time, size, colour, weight, etc., can all be given, and, therefore, when a statement expressing it in all these particulars is made, we say we have "perfect knowledge." But philosophy comes as a poser at the end of all that, and says that we have been describing only attributes, but that we do not know what is the substance behind these attributes. People are unable to answer what substance is behind the said attributes. Similarly about God, We find it quite easy to pray to God and ask some one to pray to God and attribute various things to God or God's activity with perfect clearness in our minds. But when all things stated about God are put together and analysed, then we

discover that God is a mere peripheral idea. We have a faint touch with that idea sufficient for working purposes. Our ideas have not the clearness which they have in dealing with solid objects like charcoal or gold. That is why, we call the latter the central idea and the former the peripheral idea, basing our expressions upon the analogy of the light thrown by a torch upon a field. Where there is a central strong light, on a focus, where everything seems to be clear, and again where that centre is surrounded by gradually lessening light in all directions, the circumference (the peripheral limit) seems to be nowhere. We see things about the circumference (e.g. the like appearance of the sky overhead) and feel sure that there is a circumference, but we cannot locate it with any definiteness. That is the nature of our ideas about God and about other kindred matters.

Therefore, when the question was pressed home about God, many a saint or teacher has given answers which have puzzled devotees who wanted something definite and central. In order to have a preliminary test some questioners come forward and ask a teacher or a saint "Have you seen God? As you are talking about God, this question is asked of you". The answer given is very often dependent upon the mood of the answerer. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, when first approached by Narendra (who later on became Swami Vivekananda). being anxious to grip the soul of his questioner and make him his agent for instructing the world about matters, moral and spiritual, had to answer, 'Yes, I have seen God'<sup>1</sup>. He also promised to make him (Narendra) see God. In one sense, this is true. There are certain things seen which give one the impression that one has seen God. There are hundreds of persons who have this experience and to tell them that God cannot be seen is to horrify them and make them nullify themselves. But philosophers have a way of getting behind the experience of the God-seers, and telling them that what they see is not God but something else, and their net impression is that they see God. These philosophers have also been working in ancient times when Rishis were writing the Upanishads. Kenopanishad for instance goes on declaring line after line, verse after verse, that God cannot be sensed, that he is not seen or heard or felt or even thought of.

*Yat chakshusha na pascyati yena chakshumsi pascyati Tadeva  
brahma tvam viddhi na idam yad idam upasate.*

*YaT manasa na manute yena ahur manomatam.*

*Tadeva brahma tvam viddhi na idam yad idam upasate.*

The first stanza means, 'What one does not see with the eye but that by which the eyes see. know That alone is Brahman - not this which people worship as God'. The second stanza means, 'What the mind cannot form a conception of, but what is said to be that by which the mind is conceived, that alone is Brahman, not what people here worship as God'. This forms the *Neri-Neti* portion, that is the negative, or rather the chiefly negative portion, of the description of Brahman or God. There is also a very a small panicle in the above two which sets forth the positive aspect of Brahman. But it is better to take it up after we come to explain the more popular conception of God. "God" and "Brahman", we shall use for the purpose of this Chapter as synonyms.

What is God? That which you appeal to when you are in trouble, and that which helps you when you cannot help yourself and when your friends on whom you depend cannot help you, something Superhuman, something kind, something all-powerful which comes to your rescue just at the moment when without it you are totally at a loss. Therefore, God is conceived of as a *power*. God is conceived of as something *kind*. God is conceived of as something *Superhuman*, and God is that which *we approach in times of trouble to obtain relief*, and *God is that which gives that relief*. This is a fairly correct analysis of the popular idea of God as it occurs in most cases.

Apart from giving relief, there is an idea of God also formed by people, When they approach what is vast, what is immense, and what is perfect, they express it thus: - This is God'. Everything in place and time is limited, changing; and everything dies, perishes, and is transformed, The human heart naturally longs to see something which is above all this, which is beyond place and time and the power of change and death, and which will give satisfaction to us by absorbing us and saving us from all this limitation, change and trouble. Therefore God is conceived of in this instance as something transcending the changing

manifested Universe, which has the power to absorb the soul unto itself and free it from the miseries of this changing Universe. This is the next higher idea of God which is popular and well understood.

Beyond this if we begin to analyse our notions of God, we get finer and finer and more conclusive ideas into metaphysics. The Taittiriya Upanishad sets forth that these difficulties occurred even to Superhuman beings. Indra, a God, and Virochana, an Asura were both puzzled by the question 'What Brahman is'. Brahman is felt or talked of by so many, and both these wished to understand definitely what Brahman is, and they approached the Universal father Prajapati, and asked him the question.

After making them duly observe the rules of preparation for realising such a highly important branch of knowledge, they were told what Brahman is. A similar passage occurs in the same Upanishad where Varuna, the father of Bhrigu, one of the earliest of the seven Rishis, is asked by the latter, 'What Brahman is'. Varuna, that is the Supreme, told Bhrigu, the enquirer, that he had understood clearly or felt that he understood clearly the Universe consisting of *Vak, Manas, Indriyas*, etc., and Brahman is that which is the universal origin of all this, that Brahman is the sustainer of the Universe which *he manifested from himself*. Finally that Brahman is the withdrawer into himself of all that is manifested as Universe. Bhrigu starts with a known Universe or what he considers to be a known Universe, wherein the law of cause and effect is bound to have full operation. Naturally he wishes to apply that law to the whole of the Universe and not to particular particles only. Varuna told him that the first cause, the original cause of the Universe, that which existed before the Universe, is that Brahman, the Primordial source of power and existence and that naturally it must be the same power that upholds the Universe and keeps it working in its present form. As everything we see before us changes and has an end, the whole Universe also will have its end, and the end of all that Universe is Brahman, It is the Changeless from which change *has come, by which it is maintained*, and in which it will finally merge. This is an idea that may take some time to be received and more time to be absorbed and realised, and its final realisation would result

in the individual soul giving up the false identification with the body and to consider itself as identical with that Primordial Brahman, as a result of which identification, it becomes the Brahman. This was Vamna's teaching to Bhrigu. Up-to-date, we have nothing better than this teaching.

Mostly it is understood to refer to the Impersonal Brahman, at least it is so understood by the Advaitins and the followers of Sri Sankaracharya. Visishtadvaitins and Madhvas would consider the Primordial Force to be a personality, and direct their disciples to retain their personality, and they themselves never wish to surrender their personality into the Supreme (with a view to losing their personality). Even in the final stage of life or merger, the latter two schools want the personality of the Jivas to be retained as separate entities from the personality of the Supreme and broken themselves in that state to the pomegranate seeds in the ripe fruit. This is a very rough but still fairly accurate summing up of Hindu philosophy on this subject of God. Personal and Impersonal. But a fuller statement is bound to be very long and very subtle, and cannot be put forward here. Suffice it to say that for actually knowing God, one must actually go through the process of knowing God and not merely read about it or talk about it. That process of state is called *Brahma Jnana* and it is a proverbial phrase that *Brahma Jnana* is the hardest thing for man to get. It is not everyone that can have it. Even for ordinary progress, a great deal of preparation is necessary, and the approaching Jiva must be pure, receptive, full of faith and perseverance - faith in an *Ishtmurthi* of God, and in equally powerful faith in a Guru. He must completely surrender all that he things is his, and all that he is, for the purpose of this Adhikari.

Amongst the thousands that approached Baba, just a few tried to get knowledge of this from Baba, and of them very few were real adhikaris. A great many were totally unfit and mostly were brushed aside by Baba. Occasionally Baba demonstrated their unfitness and revealed that fact to them. The Kopergaon Station Master, called Valambi Master, had no faith in Baba, and was still induced by Das Ganu to go to Baba to see what sort of person he was, and how much he could learn from him. When the Station Master with Das Ganu

reached Shirdi, and went near Baba's Mosque, Baba was taking up a number of pots, washing them, and placing them mouth downwards. The Station Master got impatient, and asked Das Ganu, 'What is all this?' At Das Ganu's instance, Baba gave the reply. Baba said, 'Every pot coming to me comes with mouth downwards'. That is, people came to Baba with their minds closed against all influence and unreceptive, that nothing could be poured into them by Baba. People who went to Baba were unreceptive. Others also who approached Baba wanted him to use all his siddhi powers for various temporal purposes.

Occasionally some turned up wanting *Brahma Jnana* from Baba to be handed over to them like a packet of sweets across the counter. One such person was a rich man who went to Baba, and expressly put the question to Baba, 'What is God like?' Baba did not address the visitor, but asked some devotee near him to go to Bagchand Marwadi and tell him that Baba wanted Rs.iOO, and then bring the money. That man returned in a minute and said, 'The Marwadi (Money lender) says that he has no money, and sends his namaskar'. Baba again sent this man to another moneylender to ask him for the loan of Rs.iOO. This time also the devotee returned saying that the moneylender said that he had no money. Baba next said, 'Fetch Nana Saheb Chandorkar'. Nana came. Then Baba told Nana that he wanted Rs.iOO. Nana at once wrote a chit to the same Bagchand Marwadi for a loan of Rs.iOO, and in a minute the money came from that Marwadi, and Nana placed that sum in Baba's hands. Baba then said, 'It is all like this in this world.' The impatient visitor could make out nothing at all and could not understand why, when he asked about God. Baba did not answer the question but went on sending people for loans, and asked Das Ganu why Baba did so. Das Ganu said that Baba had answered his question. The visitor wanted to know how. Das Ganu said, 'When others asked for money, it was not forthcoming, but when Nana Saheb asked for it, the money was at once forthcoming. So, the man who merely asks, "What is God like" does not get to know it. But the man who is qualified to know that and only the man who deserves to know that, gets that knowledge. Baba's answer, therefore is "Deserve before you desire Brahman".'

On another occasion, a very rich man came to Baba with a large amount of money in his pocket, and with great anxiety to avoid extra expenditure, as far as possible, he had engaged a cab for the journey from Kopergaon to Shirdi and back, promising to return in half an hour. So, the man came in a hurry to Baba and said, 'Baba, show me God, Brahman. It is for this I have come all this long way. People say that Shirdi Baba reveals Brahman very quickly.' Baba said, 'Do not fear. Immediately and clearly I will show you. This is not a matter that could be put off. It is hard to get questioners seeking illumination like you. (Here Baba's irony was hardly understood by the man). Most people seek wealth, cure of disease or trouble, honour, position, or perpetual pleasure and other earthly objects. None wants God. Oh, I long to see those who long to see God. Now, Brahman is the root cause of the Universe, That which accounts for Solar and Planetary motions, variations of seasons and division of all functions. One must know, i.e., realise Brahman before death. Else there will be an ever recurring cycle of births and deaths. Realisation gives '*Kevaia Advaita Sukham*'. A Guru gives it and only a Guru can'.

Baba then turned to some others and sent a boy out with these words: "Go, tell Nandalal Marwadi, Baba urgently wants a hand loan of Rs.5/- and bring the money". The boy went and found the marwadi absent. Baba sent more messages to absent men. The rich man was getting impatient at Baba's failure to give him *atmajnan* or sight of God, more especially because delay would mean extra payment to the tonga walla whom he had engaged for the return journey also. He saw, of course, that Baba wanted Rs.5 and he could stop the repeated requests of Baba for Rs.5 by paying it out of the Rs.250/-he had in his pocket. But he was oppressed with the fear that if he advanced the loan, it might prove irrecoverable. He asked Baba, 'Will you help me to grasp Brahman?' Baba replied, 'You see what I have been doing all this while is to enable you to see God even as you are now seated. Have you understood nothing? I want five. One must surrender the five to get at Brahman. One must surrender the five senses (*Indriyas*), the five *pranas* and *manas*, *Buddhi*, *Ahankar* (Mind, Intellect and Ego) (all of which involve *Vairagya* i.e., detachment). The road to *Brahma*

*Jnana* is hard to tread. All cannot tread it. When it dawns, there will be light. One who feels unattached to things terrestrial and celestial is alone competent to have *Brahmajnan'*.

The man found that Baba had read his strong attachment to the Rs.5/- which he considered more important than getting *Brahmajnana* Upadesa.

Baba taught the absolute importance of complete surrender of *Tan Man Dan*, that is, body, mind and possessions, as an essential preliminary to fitness to understand and be absorbed in God. This surrender is set out in *Srimad Bhagavata* and other works. One way of Baba's teaching people is to ask a person to go and attend the *pothy* reading of a particular passage. Once Baba asked Buty for Rs. 161/2 *dakshina*, when Buty had not that sum on hand. Buty replied that he had not the money just then. Then Baba asked him to go to H.S. Dixit, and not only ask him for this Rs.161/2 but also to be listening to the *pothy* which Dixit was reading. Accordingly Buty came to Dixit and asked for the money. Dixit had stopped his practice and had little cash on hand. So H.S. Dixit replied that he had only Re.1/- in his possession, and could not advance Rs.161/2. Buty said, "Baba asked me, however, to listen to your *pothy'*. Then Dixit read his *Bhagavata*, and the first stanza that he read was—

*Kayenavacha manasendriyaira Buddhyatmanava prakrutes swabhavar*

*Karomi yatyat sakalam parasmai Srinan narayanayeti samarpayami*

This is with reference to the complete surrender of all acts to God. And Brahmins, after performing ceremonies, close all their ceremonies with *Iswararpanam* of the ceremonies gone through or mantras practised, by uttering this stanza. Now Baba had asked for Rs.161/2. What has Rs.161/2 to do with this stanza? Firstly there are seventeen phrases in this stanza. Next the objects for surrender mentioned are 16 in number, but *Chittra* has been omitted in the text. So says the *Jnaneswari* commentary. If that is added, it would make the objects to be surrendered 17. But *Chittra* is only half. So, the 16 1/2 objects mentioned there are directed to be surrendered to God. And Baba is God. So the direction of Baba was that Buty, Kaka, and all other devotees should in accordance with

this stanza give him Rs.16<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> that is, *surrender their entire personality*, which are thus reckoned as 161/2 in number.

As to further steps to know God, Baba gave full details to Radha Bai Deshmukhin. She was determined to get upadesa mantra out of Baba. On that occasion Baba showed that persons who came forward with questions 'Have you seen God', 'What is God', etc, were setting about in the wrong fashion, and would get little benefit. 'God' Baba said, is not something to be grasped in a psychology or philosophy class or something to be achieved with the utterance of Vedic mantras to be got by heart in a Vedic class.

*nayamatma pravachanena tabhyo no medhaya na bahuna scrutena  
yamevaisha vrunute tena labhyah tasyaisha vntnute tanoom svam*

Seeing God is a realisation by the soul that surrenders itself entirely in a particular manner to one who is capable of imparting God-realisation, and therefore, the real truth, the most precious truth of God-realisation, was revealed by Baba to just one or two of his devotees who showed themselves to be in dead earnest and who had fitted themselves for at least putting their steps on the threshold of *Brahma Jnana* or God-realisation, These two were Radha Bai Deshmukhin and Anna Saheb Dabolkar. Though an account has been given of these earlier, still the previous secret given to them may be repeated here. The reader should read it scores of time.

Radha Bai Deshmukhin had come with the determination to make Baba her Guru and to get upadesa from him in order to attain all that Baba had achieved in the matter of God-realisation. So she went and asked Baba to give her upadesa. Baba did not respond. Then, she hit upon *satyagraha*. She retired to her quarters and resolved not to eat or drink anything at all till Baba gave her upadesa, and if death should follow, she was prepared for it. Noting this severe resolve of hers, practised for three days, Shama, who was living in that wada thought it wise to go to Baba and tell him, 'Here is this woman determined to kill herself unless you give upadesa. Why not utter some God's name and make her take it as upadesa?' Then Baba sent for her and told her, "Mother, I am your child. You are my mother. Why do you think of dying and torturing yourself? Take

pity on me, your child. I am a beggar. Look here, my Guru was a great saint and highly merciful. I fatigued myself in trying to serve him and yet he did not utter any mantra in my ear. Instead he first shaved me clean and then begged of me two pice. What he wanted was not metallic coin—he did not care even for gold, but only *Nishta* and *Saburi*, i.e. *faith* and *courageous patience*. I gave these to him and at once he was pleased.

"Mother, *Saburi* is courage, do not discard it. It ferries you across to the distant goal. It gives manliness to men, eradicates sin and dejection and overcomes all fears.

"For 12 years I waited on my Guru, who is peerless and loving. How can I describe his *love* to me? When he was Dhyanaasta (in love trance) I sat and gazed at him; and we were both filled with Bliss. I cared not to turn my eye upon anything else. Night and day I pored upon his face with an ardour of love that banished hunger and thirst. The Guru's absence, even for a second, made me restless. I meditated upon nothing but the Guru and had no goal or object other than the Guru. Unceasingly fixed upon him was my mind. Wonderful indeed the art of my Guru! I wanted nothing but the Guru and he wanted nothing but my love. Apparently actionless, he never neglected me, but always protected me by his glance.

"That Guru—I tell the truth, sitting as I do in this Masjid— never blew any mantra into my ear; nor do I blow any into yours. Go thou and do likewise.

*"If you make me the sole object of your thoughts and aims, you will attain Paramartha, the supreme goal. Look at me with undivided attention; so will I look at you. This is the only truth my Guru taught me. The four sadhanas and the six sastras are not necessary. With entire confidence, trust your Guru. That is enough."*

The lady bowed, accepted the advice and gave up her satyagraha.

This, as we find in so many puranas, was repeated by Shama to Dabolkar. Here is again the advice given by Sai Baba to Dabolkar with words apparently different but really conveying it, Baba said to Dabolkar once, 'Give me a dakshina of Rs.15'. As he had not the money; Baba sent him to Shama to ask him for

Rs.15, and also to stay with him for a while, have a chat, and then bring the Rs.15 as dakshina which Shama would give. When Dabolkar reported this to Shama, he was puzzled. He said, 'Look at this Baba. He is sending big pandits like you to fools like me. As for the dakshina of Rs.15, I have no money, and I can only offer my namaskars. As for talking, I do not know what to tell you'. After a time, Shama told Dabolkar of the story of Radha Bai Deshmukhin. Then Dabolkar returned to Baba and narrated to him his talk with Shama. Baba then said, 'Our art is unique. Remember this. To get *Atmajnan*, *Dhyana* is needed, i.e., the *Attna Anushtana* that pacifies and carries the mind into *Samadhi*. So *give up all desires* and  *dwell in your mind upon God in all*. If the mind is thus concentrated, the Goal is achieved.

'For Dhyana, meditate on me either as with form or as formless, mere Ananda. If such formless contemplation is hard, then think of my form, just as you see it here. Think of it night and day. With such meditation, the mind dissolves into unity (i.e., *attains Laya*). The difference between subject and object (me and you) and the act of contemplation will be lost. This results in *Chaitanya Ghanata*, *Brahma Samarasata*. The Guru's glance is bread and milk to the pupil'. Baba gave sugarcandy prasad to Dabolkar and said, 'If you keep this instruction in mind, it will be as sweet as this sugarcandy'. Baba recommended the study of Sravana of the Katha followed by Manana, Nidhidhyasa, Smarana, and Dhyana, all of which will lead to realisation of Ananda Ghana. Baba said 'That which is seen is the manifestation of Brahman through Maya and will dissolve again into Brahman. Look into the six sastras to see if the Atman is one or as many as there are jivas. The crown of Jnana is the realisation of the one Atman, from which everything has issued.

'By Rinanubandha, you have come to me. Have regard to Rinanubandha. Whoever or whatever creature comes to you, do not drive them away but receive with due consideration. Give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and clothes to the naked. Then God will be pleased. Do not bark at people. Be not pugnacious. Bear with others' reproach. Speak only gentle words. This is the way to happiness. Let others and the world turn topsy-turvy, but do not mind that.

Keep on to your own course straight. The world maintains a wall—the wall of differentiation between oneself and other, between you and me. Destroy this wall. God is the supreme Lord. Allah Malik. Wondrous, precious, and long enduring are his works. Your object will be fulfilled in due course. We shall both attain bliss by mutual love.'

Thus Baba's answer to the question 'What is God' is that the question cannot be answered in words of course, as the real truth about God is one to be felt at heart. One should grow into God and then only he knows God. It is only by developing the little spark of Love that Baba will ignite in your heart, and blowing it into a name, that you can be transformed into a mass of love. God is love, nothing but love. Everything it touches is turned into love. Even the basest creatures feel the power of the purely loving soul, and tigers and murderers give up their qualities in the presence of a fiercely loving soul. It is only when a soul gets to be so very powerful, magnetic, or dynamic with love, it understands and expresses God as love. No other answer to the question 'What is God' is worth having. So, this is Baba's answer to the question 'What is God?'

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Religion and Commonsense**

Some people are apt to fancy that commonsense is some special peculiar faculty with which a few people or a number of people are invested. It is just as well to correct that error at once. Commonsense is no special faculty. It is the exercise of the ordinary powers of every mind utilised in observing facts, whether facts of life, modes of behaviour, their effects, or facts of nature, etc. and the arrival at the conclusion as to the most appropriate course of conduct or the most proper inference from the facts and positions observed. Religion is found throughout the human race and therefore, the commonsense of the entire humanity dictates the course of conduct called religion. No doubt the course of religious life in various countries and at various times have differed very widely.

Some ideas underlying such conduct are found to be fit to be called systems of philosophy. These systems have been boldly declared in some cases and we find one system often opposed to another. Nothing is more often heard in

religious circles, Hindu and Christian, than the assertion that life is a vale of tears, that the best thing for a man to do is to get rid of it so that he may reach an eternal Heaven where everything is peace, bliss, and happiness. This may be called the *pessimistic religion*- The converse of it is the optimistic religion. Many people in many countries have rebelled against the idea that life is all bitter. Commonsense shows that if life is bitter, people would part with it readily and cheerfully. In fact, nobody likes to give up life whatever may be the privations, sorrows and troubles he may be put to. In spite of numerous grievances, troubles, pain and sorrow, the general drift of life is found to be on the whole bearable and happy for the majority of mankind at any rate. Therefore the optimistic religion is one of self-complacency linked with the idea of God. Without that link, it will not be religion. It will be merely barren conceit, but people who are in a mood to observe the existence of higher powers and who seek the explanation of the various phenomena around them in the existence of an all powerful, knowing, benevolent supreme power, find that the world with its preponderance of joy, especially one's own individual life is due to that Supreme Ruler, God. So, the optimist in religion is thankful to God, recognises the numerous beneficial laws and principles obtaining everywhere and he makes the best use of these laws for promoting the greatest good of himself and of humanity, not merely for the present moment but for life as a whole. Many consider that Hinduism is pessimistic, but this is an inaccurate statement. In fact, far too many here are optimistic amongst the religious in conduct and experience while uttering pessimism with lips. Some twist passages in well-known scriptures to suit their ideas. In latter day works in India, there is no doubt an abundance of pessimistic literature. Pessimism has become the fashion with many a man, and is too often assumed to be the basis of religion.

This is not a matter which one can view with complacency. To be fair to oneself and to God, and to understand Sri Sai and other great souls, one should frankly face the truth and see whether life is really a vale of tears. If any one conscientiously analyses the nature of all the experiences he has, say, within the last day or week or month or year, he will have to admit that the majority of

experiences are pleasant and joyous. Even if a man is not in good health, the few pleasures that are allowed to him give him so much joy, and the power of recuperation of health is inside each individual. One feels that there is a vast preponderance of joy and material for joy in life, and as the Giver of all things is God, one must be thankful to God for providing the existing good and the power to develop one's life so as to provide more and more of good for oneself and for his surroundings. It is not necessary to go exhaustively into the latter day pessimistic authorities. It is enough if we take the earlier authorities e.g. the Bhagawad Gita, which is the summary of the Upanishads and therefore cannot be considered to be a latter day publication. The Gita does not say that life is bitter and a thing to be eschewed. There are two sentences in the Gita, which must be examined. One sentence is—

*Anityam asukam lokam*

*Imam prapya bhajasv mam*

This means, 'Being in a world which is not happy and which is evanescent, take refuge in Me and worship Me'.

The other sentence is —

*Maam tipetya punarjanma dhuhkalayam ascascvalam*

*Na aapnuvanti mahaatmanah samsiddhim paramam gataah.*

This means, 'The great souls, who have attained the goal of their existence, seek God and escape this existence which is full of sorrow and which is evanescent'. The second sentence is but the repetition of the previous idea. Now it is well-known that a single sentence should not be taken out of a whole composition as indicating the author's ideas, especially when separated from the context. Here the context is all important. Sri Krishna addressed these two sentences towards Arjuna in a discourse which resulted from Arjuna's absolute despondency and declaration that he found nothing in life worth living for and that life was bitter to him from any aspect whether the battle he was about to start was won or lost. So Sri Krishna's words saying that life was painful referred to *Arjuna's* state and view that life was painful.

There is abundance of evidence in other parts of the Gita to show that life properly lived is not painful. Again the Gita rests upon the Upanishads. The Upanishads contain numerous views of numerous Rishis uttered at various times under various circumstances. As to the question of life being bitter, it cannot be said that the Upanishads declared it to be so. (1) Schedule of Bliss given in Taittiriya Upanishad begins with experienced human bliss of a life time of a virtuous and healthy youth; (2) When an analysis of life is given in the Upanishads, we find that there is a clear statement that the central keystone of life, its nucleus or pith of it is that life is essentially bliss. Life-human is analysed, and the human life called Jiva is resolved into Brahman, which is Satchidananda. In the Panchakosa Vidya life is analysed into five sheaths. The *Annamaya kosa*, the *Pranamaya kosa*, the *Manomaya kosa*, and the *Vignanamaya kosa*, are the first lower four sheaths of the central factor, namely, *Anandamaya kosa* or *Ananda*. Man is said to realise it everyday in his deep sleep when all other *kosas* are forgotten. (3) When asked as to what Brahman is, the pupil investigates what constitutes Brahman. The Upanishad i.e. seer says first that *Anna.....* to be Brahman but not really Brahman.

Then *prana*, then *manas*, and then *vijnana* or reason, all these thrown out, and it is only bliss or Ananda that is said to be Brahman or God. *Anando Brahmeti, Vyajanath*. That is 'He knew that Ananda was bliss or God'. The individual soul is declared to be part and parcel of or identical with Brahman or God. So with that as the central essence of the Upanishad, one cannot say that life of the individual is miserable or a mere magazine of pain. It will be so, if the laws regulating it are not properly observed. If God's ordinances are violated, then pain results, pain being the stimulus to redirect the individual to follow Dharma. So, there is no sufficient theoretical basis for the position that life is sorrow.

Theories apart, let us consider practice. Here there are Gurus and Gurus. Some merely repeat and make their pupils repeat dicta about the painfulness of life. But there are other Gurus who point out that life properly lived is full of the joy of living, the joy of performance of duty. One who is determined not to

swallow conventionalities and give up his happiness may find great solace in approaching Gurus of the latter type.

Sri Sai Baba is pre-eminent among Gurus who shook off conventional and meaningless aphorisms and shibboleths drowning people in pessimistic ideas and making them inert and unfit for life's activities. Sri Sai Baba had various devotees, large numbers of whom believed that life in samsara was painful. Only one or two seem to have had the courage to mention it to Baba, for example, Nana Saheb Chandorkar. As soon as Nana Chandorkar told Baba, 'Baba! this samsara is dreadful. I do not wish to touch it even with a pair of tongs, Let me be free from it,' Baba retorted that though there was some grain of sense or meaning in what he said, the total of what he said was absurd. Baba said, 'Your idea that the sorrows of life can be escaped by man by running away from society into the forest, etc., is absurd. Wherever you go, you have got your body and mind, and your body and mind give you your joys and sorrows in any place and every place. The body, as long as it lasts, must produce its *prarabdha karma* of sorrows and joys. Therefore the proper course would be to face facts and lead the proper life'. Rebirth is considered a terror by many. But Baba did not, even on one out of the numerable occasions when he mentioned rebirth, say that rebirth was a matter for sorrow. He mentioned numerous births of his own in the past, and said that he would be born again, and nowhere did he say that rebirth was a deplorable fact. He said that as long as any pupil of his was still undeveloped, he would be born again and again with him until he took him to God. Such a life of Baba being reborn again and again to see to the safety and success of people's lives is far from being a life of sorrow. It is a series of Avatars and no one has the hardihood to say, outside the lines of poetry, that God in undergoing Avataras is undergoing suffering.

*Vishnuryene dasavaiara gahane kshipto mahan sankate,*

*Brahma yena kulalavat myamito brahmandabandodare*

That is, Karma is addressed by the poet jocularly by saying that even Maha Vishnu was drawn by karma into ten Avataras or rebirths. This is of course poetic

flair. It is ridiculous to suppose that God takes Avatara by compulsion of karma. God takes fresh life whenever he considers fit of his own free will.

*Yadayadahi dharmasya glanir bhavati bharata*

*Abhyuttanam adharmasya tadatmanam srujamiaham*

That is, 'Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and an uprising of unrighteousness, then I (God) incarnate myself in human form in order to help the good, curb the wicked, and establish dharma'. This free will of God to take up a human form is not considered to be any pain. Therefore, when a life modelled on such activities, for instance, the life of Sri Sai Baba, is being reborn for the benefit of devotees, it is ridiculous to suggest that rebirth is pain. In fact there is a pleasure in taking pains on behalf of others. That highest pleasure is *scanti*, mental calm, and the correct view therefore is that if one can work himself up to be free from excessive attachment and excessive repulsion and lead a life of the golden mean, to enjoy as much poise or peace as possible in this present life and ensure power control one's future lives and carry them on the same lines and promote the benefit of all, that life is a brilliant and happy period. And a series of such lives is one brilliant and happy continuous span. For these great souls remember all their previous and future births even, and their life is anything but unhappy. Therefore, Baba by his words and deeds exploded the theory that life is a vale of tears necessarily for everyone.

One form which pessimism takes in matters of religion is misanthropy and absolute seclusion from all human contacts. Timon of Athens is the Beau ideal of this class. There is an abundance of direction in spiritual books regarding shunning of *sanga* and the need for *ekanta* or solitude for a Yoga practitioner. Some people forgetting the difference between the beginner's stage and the later stages think that everyone religiously minded would be doing the best by running away from society and from all human contact and getting into a perch in some remote forest or some remote hill in order to forget his body in absolute trance for days, weeks, and months, as according to Valmiki's Ramayana Viswamitra did by way of tapas for becoming a Brahman. This notion is eminently unpractical and anyone who tries it will be quickly rewarded with severe punishment both in

body and mind, may be, even by loss of life. The miserable ending of such a life, with pain and sorrow in the mind, far away from all human help and sympathy can never be the ideal for any person with commonsense. Sri Sai Baba and several other prominent saints warned people against being carried away by such examples and trying such feats of asceticism (fit for perhaps one in a million). For persons living in society, it is absolutely absurd and even cowardly to run away from the midst of their contacts and seek calm and relief in some distant, remote, uninhabited place. Wherever we go, the mind is with us with its past traces giving us real company though unseen and imposing a number of mental fancies and feelings which one cannot escape from. The attempt is purely infructuous to avoid the physical while the physical is enshrined in the mental from which one cannot get away. As Emerson said, 'When you seek to fly from me, I am the wings with which you fly'. The mind seeks to escape from itself, but it cannot. One wants to escape from Prakriti or Nature, but one cannot do so at least instantaneously. A very, very, gradual and partial change of nature is possible, but escape from nature is an absurdity. Many people find that their present contacts with family, friends, acquaintances, social circles, etc., are the causes of much pain and that these drag them down, in their effort to attain purity of soul and ability to identify themselves with the Paramatma or be forever at the feet of Parameswar. These contacts were not created in a day and cannot be cut off in a minute. They have become part and parcel of one's nature and they have to be reckoned with. If one understands them aright and uses them properly, far from being impediments in one's spiritual progress they may be made the stepping stones of higher and higher progress.

To take one instance, let us consider *Love*. Love towards one's wife, children, parents, sisters brothers, and friends, is one of the commonest items, and many consider them even in their ordinary stale ennobling, but those intrepid souls burning with eagerness to attain the highest in a minute, find that these social shackles are an absolute bar to any attempt at thinking of the highest even for a few moments and absolute bars for absorption in the highest. Hence they desire to escape from these fetters. Now this question has been raised and

solved by great saints like Sri Sai Baba, and if we wish to make satisfactory progress, we cannot do better than seek their aid at present and follow their example and the counsels they gave and give to various persons at various times.

First let us take up theory and authorities. Even, from the point of theory and authority, the warnings against family fetters are few and of later day origin.

*Kaate kaantaa kaste put rah*

*Samsaro uyam ateeva vichitrah*

This means that, Sri Sankara says in his Moha Mudgara, "Think on this constantly: Who is 'your wife' and who is 'your son?' This samsara (family) is most surprising". These words were evidently addressed to sanyasis who have to shed their previous life and start a new ashram with new ideals, and have no application to persons who wish to achieve spiritual progress even from their present ashram, say, Grihasthrama or Brahmacharya Asrama, take for instance, love to the wife mentioned above. This is a fairly common feature of social life, and no doubt, in the vast majority of cases, wives being what they are, having a wife proves a drag upon a man's chances of progress, except perhaps for this that the wife often gives trouble and troubles make man think of his spirit and of God. But this need not necessarily be so, and in numerous cases is not the fact and in any case thinking of God is practised by grihasthas. A wife is intended by the sastras to be a *Sahadharamacharini*, that is, a companion or helpmate to one in social and religious life enabling him to fulfil his various duties to members of his family, strangers, guests, etc. In that view, there is no necessity to have any revulsion at the idea of having a wife. Relationship towards the son is very similar. Usually a son is loved very dearly by both the parents and a son is said, according to puranic ideas, to be a necessity for saving one from going to hell (*Put Naraka*), But a son reminds one that he can continue the geneological line only through the son, and that the family's status, name, fame, and traditions require some one to carry on the work of oneself, and the son may become the prop of one's life when one gets into the last stage of life *sans* teeth, *sans* eyes, *sans* taste, *sans* all, *sans* everything.

The love of offspring is deeply implanted in nature and is perhaps best illustrated in the case of the tigress which, when lying down with a cub, will not allow persons to come even within a distance of one hundred yards for fear that safety of the cub may be endangered. The tigress is fierce when it has its cub with it and that is due to the fact of maternal love. Philoprogenitiveness is a fact of nature, and phrenologists locate a portion near the pituitary gland as its location. As for the need for the love of progenys apart from the tigress, let us go to the first tigress that begot the Universe. '*So Akamayata Bahusyam Prajayeya Iti*'. This means, 'He (Brahman) desired (this): Let me become many and have issue'. It is that same desire for issue that originated the universe that is still underlying the desire for issue and the love of issue in every being, whether feline or human. Such an urge cannot be a mistake of nature, and cannot be considered fit for absolute condemnation. There may be necessity for curbing it, moderating it, regulating it, or otherwise dealing with it. But the total extinction and abhorrence of the idea of having issue or abhorrence for the issue instead of love for the issue is not found. No doubt there are cases of parents who poison the child or children to get wealth, etc. But these are monstrous freaks of nature and not to be held as models for a religious aspirant.

Apart from all question of authority, going into the principle, we see that love is in itself a very noble idea and a human being with love is far superior to one without love. So noble indeed it is that most religions declare that *God is Love*. Love beams as bliss. God is Love and Bliss, and we find the statement that God is Love and Love is God not only in English poerty but also in other literature. What is the meaning of the term, 'God is Love?'<sup>1</sup> What is God in the first instance? God is conceived of as the primary source of all manifestation or put into personal language, God is treated as the father of all creatures.

*Father of all in every age In every clime adored. By saint or savage or by sage, Jehovah Jove or Lord.*

A father, human or divine, naturally loves his children, and God is conceived of by every religionist as loving all created beings with equal love, and yet we find persons of several religions sometimes condemning love as a fetter

and feeling a great desire to get away from love. If love is banished from the soul, then nothing is left. In fact God himself vacates the heart when love is driven away from it. Pure love being bliss, a heart without love must be as barren as a rock, and it is difficult to believe that anybody should desire to become a barren rock instead of being a person with feelings who can appreciate love and return love. The harmful working of the principle of love in actual practice can be prevented by noting how the harm comes in.

A man with limited resources having some sense is very anxious to ensure that the benefits which his worldly goods enable him to give his sons are not shared away by others as that may diminish the quantity which the sons might get. Hence he begins to be jealous of or hating other people for the sake of his sons. This is called exclusive love or more properly 'exculsive attachment' for all attachment is not love. Pure love ought to have no element of hatred in it. God's love to all his creatures is pure love. There is no element of hatred in that love and there can never be. That is the model for all persons who care to have love in their soul. To avoid the danger of love of offspring developing into hatred of others, one ought to constantly recall one's social duties and one's duties to oneself.

Harbouring hatred is harbouring poison. One's real nature is destroyed by the insertion of even a small idea of hatred in it. One gets miserable if one hates others, for when there is hatred, there is ever-present peril to one's own safety and comfort even temporal. It is the nonhater that is free from danger. "*Lokat na udviyate*". Love, i.e. pure love, leads to sacrifice. And sacrifice should never have any touch of hatred or contact with hatred in it. If I sacrifice to my God and hate the other Gods, the work I do is not the work of God but of Satan. Love can be enabled and made purer by constant watching of oneself and one's behaviour. It is perfectly possible to love one's wife and offspring without introducing elements of hatred, in spite of the limited nature of one's resources and nature. It is perfectly possible to restrain oneself from harbouring the hatred of others while living with one's family. Examples of this sort have been set by saints who lived with families. For instance, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had a wife. That did

not make him hate others. Also Mahasaya Durgacharan Nag. Numerous other instances may be mentioned from the history of saints in Europe.

There is no doubt a difficulty in reconciling one's duties towards the family with the calls made upon one by others. But the reconciliation is possible and increasing success will attend upon one's efforts, the more one tries. The most proper course for any sadhaka or any grihasta with lofty and high spiritual aims is to carry the love he has in the circle of his family to as distant lengths as possible. If I love my own children, my endeavour ought to be that I should begin to love the children of others on the sample of my love to my own children. The idea of love cannot originate in a mind unless there is the relationship of father and son and so on. Therefore, there is no meaning in condemning the very root and saying that a sadhaka must sacrifice the roots of love. The roots of love and noble feeling are in the family relation. By loving one's parents or wife or children one begins for the first time to understand what love is. Then one's duty is to purify and expand that love and see that it assumes the character of divine love. No doubt God can love millions and human beings cannot easily love even a dozen. But it is the duty of any serious sadhaka who starts on his spiritual enterprise to see how far he can go. He can surely expand his love beyond the limits of family. He can surely help his neighbours and love his neighbour's children. He can surely sympathise with the people of his clan or gotra and have love expanded to the limits of the gotra. Similarly it can be further expanded to the nation and ought finally to embrace all humanity. No doubt with the increase in the extent to which love is applied, there is a necessary tendency to diminish its intensity. Ultimately when a man says 'I love all mankind', it is apt to be a mere lip profession with very little of feeling in the heart. But one must remember that this is an ideal, and an ideal can be accomplished or nearly accomplished only by great efforts and gradually. Therefore it is pointed out in great works like the Gita that spiritually great ones are those who are '*Sarvabhuta Hite Ratah*'. that is, loving all creatures. *Ran* is love or deep interest. The direction is given that the highest bhakti or yoga should aim at sympathising with and helping on with the friendly feeling or loving heart all creatures, whether they belong to one's family

or even one's species or not. Men must love cats and dogs, ants and flies, and feel that God is in them all, and that God in those forms compels them to yield their heart as freely as possible. It is easier no doubt to love your son than to love an ant or fly, but that is no reason why you should not help a fly or an ant or a dog or a cat as much as you can. In any case, you must start by beginning with 'Ahimsa'. If you are cruel to creatures, you cannot possibly love them. Himsa and Love are the opposite poles. So to start universal love, avoid hatred of any one. '*Nirvairah sarva bhuteshu*' That is, a man who hates no creature at all is said to be the best devotee of Sri Krishna in Chapter XII of the Gita. Starting therefore by avoiding hatred, proceed next to see in what possible cases sympathy can take more positive and concrete forms than avoidance of injury. Whatever is possible for you to do to other creatures, try and do that. That will be a positive act which engenders a feeling of love and enables you to achieve love to all beings. That is, *Sarvabhuta Hite Ratah*.

Let us take concrete instances to inspire us in this course of conduct. Sri Sai Baba was the best illustration that we can have of this *Sarvabhuta Hite Ratah*. With his vast power of *Antaryatmitva*, he could get inside every creature (man, cat or dog), and make it perform any act that he wanted, and he was also feeling what happened to it as something that happened to him. When after a full meal he was seated in the Mosque or Dwarkamayee after feeding as many creatures as possible, a bitch came up hungry putting out its tongue and gazing at him wistfully as much as to say, "Lo and behold; I am hungry". Baba at once told a lady (Lakshmi Bai) who was near that he was hungry, and made that lady bring a plateful of good food intended for him. Baba at once placed the whole of it before the bitch. Lakshmi Bai was thunderstruck. "What! you said that you were hungry, and now you have given the whole thing to the bitch" she asked. Baba then said, 'I and the bitch are one. She is hungry. Dogs do not speak. But we speak. It is the same whether she eats or I eat'. This is the peak reached by one who climbs up the ladder of *samatva* and *Sarvabhuta Hite Ratah* and *Antaryatmitva*. He placed himself inside the heart of each creature, and this really shows that He is '*Sarvabhuta Atma Bhuta Atma*', that is, the soul of all creatures.

That, of course, is the position of God or one who realises himself as God. For, God is the soul of all creatures. This is the aim of religion to lose one's being in divinity, and that is done by becoming *Sarvabhuta Atma Bhuta Atma*. Many people may think that this is a hopelessly impossible task for any sane man to attempt. But Baba's example shows that it is a perfectly feasible task and that Baba accomplished it. Incidentally this shows that love to creatures may take the shape of offering material assistance whenever that is possible regardless of the low position usually assigned to many creatures such as dogs.

Love—overflowing love—naturally rebels against the idea of classification of creatures, some as low and some as high. In Narada Bhakti Sutras, Sri Narada says, 'Amongst them (that is. bhaktas), there is no high and no low. All are one'. If one's heart overflows with love to God, differences between man and man, or man and creatures, or creatures and creatures pales away into insignificance. That is the sign of true and powerful love, and the extent to which man has ripened in his love can be tested by seeing what distinctions he draws, how he treats the various creatures as they contact him and what he thinks of his own conduct in respect of all that he contacts.

Sai Baba's dealings with various creatures and persons of various types and classes gives one the impression that his was uniform love, loving everyone that came within his contact or reach. That is the example for one to copy or the ideal for one to achieve. Of course all are not Sai Baba but all should try to become Sai Babas. The world will be Heaven when this is achieved.

Thus we see that love is capable of expansion from the family on to the widest limits of existence. Sai Baba never hated family ties and never condemned them as hopeless fetters. During the period of probation of H.S. Dixit's Vanaprasta, he kept him away from contacts, family contacts as well as other contacts for a period of nine months, and then the probation ended and his contacts were resumed. Baba never condemned all contact. In the case of Upasani Baba, he tried to sever his contact with family and that was for a very high purpose to turn him into a remarkable specimen of spiritual achievement. But for Baba himself, family ties were never considered hindrances. He referred

to the fact that he had various relations, namely, father, sisters, brothers, and cousins and that he maintained a high level of duty towards everyone of them in every Janma or birth. For instance, he has in one Janma supported his brothers by undertaking contract work and helped to feed them all when the managing brother was starving them. Then on another occasion when a brother of his was excommunicated, he worked hard and got him readmitted to caste. When his father's mistress, whom he considered to be his mother, (however loose moralled she might be) was suffering, he fed her, treated and cured her, and was kind towards her because she was the wife of his father. Again when a girl playmate of his died, he went to the tomb that girl was haunting as a ghost, and brought her up to Shirdi and placed her in a position where she could listen to holy scripture and thus improved her spiritual condition. He did his very best for his friends like Veerabhadrappa, Basappa, Gauri, etc., giving them whatever help was absolutely essential. A perusal of the Gospel of Sai Baba would show that Baba valued social ties and never condemned them. The correct course therefore for any Sai devotee seems to be not to hate family ties but to honour them and see that they are worked not in a narrow spirit but in a spirit of universal love and sympathy. Our love to our friends and relations and mankind should enable us to love others and go on widening the circle of persons who would receive our help and sympathy. If we work on those lines which are the lines of Sai Baba, family ties will not be a curse but a blessing.

Religion is a very broad term and authorities on religion are varied and innumerable. Even for Hinduism there are so many books of which special sets are honoured by special groups. Yet, for practical purposes, we may take it that the Bhagavad Gita is a book on which there is practically unanimity amongst all groups and sub-sects, and there are numerous people who have resolved to make the Bhagavad Gita the guide for their conduct in everyday life, chiefly in matters of religion. The question, therefore, is whether the Gita counsels abdication of one's best in life and running away to remote forests or hills for leading an absolutely quiet self-centred life, full of the happiness of Brahman, or whether it advocates a life led in the din and bustle of life attending to hundreds

of persons with thousands of claims upon one meeting each in his own field with his own arms and in his own appropriate way.

To commonsense, it would appear that absolute desertion of society is impossible or, if possible, mad and absurd. It is like a man who, unable to cure a painful ulcer on his nose, cuts his own throat as a cure. If, therefore, the authority of the Gita on the point is wanted, that is patent. Arjuna was at the beginning of the Gita in an absolutely hopeless condition. He could not see which way he should go. Whatever he did would only result in misery, sin and trouble, and there was no happiness in view in following any course, fighting or not fighting. He, in his dejection, first declared that he would not fight and that he would run away from his duties. The Gita corrects him, and the Lord told him that he should stick to his post and do his duty, however wretched it might appear..

*Screyan svadharmo vigunah paradharmat svanushtitat*

*Svadharme nidhanam screyah, paradharmo bhayavahah*

This means, 'Even if one's duty is not charming and appears to be without merit, that is better than deserting it and adoption of others' dharmas. Death in the course of doing one's our duty is conducive to one's ultimate welfare. Adoption of others duties (by neglecting one's own) is full of terror (terror being the terrors of hell).' In the result, Arjuna gave up his dejection and his desertion of his asrama duty and resumed his original attitude of determination to do his Kshatriya's duty of battling in war.

Hence, passages should not be pieced out of Bhagavad Gita and twisted so as to bear the construction that what Sri Krishna advised was that a person be completely absorbed in the self and not attend to anything else. There are such passages in the Gita which have been sometimes so misunderstood. As an instance, we may cite one. In the sixth chapter, as elsewhere, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna that he must treat friend and foe alike and that he should show samatva towards all. Should this be taken to mean that Arjuna should slay his brother quite as readily as he would slay the enemies in the opposite camp? Obviously not. The passages which say that a person should be completely absorbed in the Lord are as plentiful as blackberries. Here are some.

*Alma aupamyena sarvatra samam pascyatyo arjuna,  
Sukhamva yadiva dhuhkam sa yogi paramo matah:  
Prascantatma vigatabhiih brahmachari vratestitah  
Manas samyamya machchitto yukta aaseeta matparah  
Suhritu mitrah udaasina madhyasta dveshya bandhushu  
Sadhushu apicha papeshu samabhuddhiih visishyate  
Yata indriya mano bhuddhiih munih moksha parayanah  
Vigata icha bhaya krodho yas soda mukta eva saha.*

Like these many may be quoted which are being too literally applied and which are taken to authorise one's action of giving up the present dealings with innumerable friends and foes and simply sitting concentrating on one's own self, in whatever way that self may be understood. It is patent that the Gita is no authority for escape of duty. The Gita gives numerous directions which are useful to numerous persons in various walks of life and in various circumstances. All of them should not be taken together as one advice applicable to every one in every circumstance. In the battle field a man who mistakes friend for foe and foe for friend or for neutral will see his mistake all too quickly. He will have no more of physical life to judge the mistake of his conduct, for his head would roll on the ground all too soon. Commonsense should enable everyone to note how each piece of advice is to be applied.

There is a distinct body of counsels or advice given to a person wishing to obtain perfect bliss—*Brahmananda*. He has to begin with the practice of something like *Ashtanga Yoga* beginning with *Yama* and *Niyama* and going on with *Asana*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyanam*, *Samadhi*, including probably *Pranayama* which, however, is not mentioned expressly in *Abhyasa Yoga* of Chapter VI of the Gita, the omission being probably rectified by reference to *Pranayama Parayanah* in the other chapters of the Gita. The description given in Chapter VI of a person who goes on with *Abhyasa Yoga* is so charming and one would be tempted to adopt this *Ashtanga Yoga* perpetually as the sole business of his life. Verses 20 and 21 say that the man who is absolutely concentrated in the self will be absorbed in that alone and will find supreme delight therein.

Verses 22 and 23 say that the said delight is par excellence the one thing to obtain. Thereafter pain and sorrows cannot trouble one. The direction is given in verses 23—

*Tamvidhyat dhuhka samyoga viyogam yoga samgitam  
Sa nischayena yuktavyo yogo anirvinna chetasa.*

Verse 24 says—

*Sankalpa prabhavaan kaamaan tyaktva sarvan aseshatah  
Manasaiva indriva graamam viniyamya scamantatah.*

Verses 25 and 26 say : 'After concentrating the mind, the man should not think of anything else, and even if his thoughts wander, they must be drawn back again to the self. Verse 27 says that by these efforts the self becomes peaceful, calm, and the highest bliss, born of contact with the Supreme, will come to him, and all Rajas, etc., will go away. Verse 28 says—

*Yunjannevensada aatmaanam yogi vigathakalmashah  
Sukhena Brahmasamsparscam atyantam sukham Asnute.*

This means, 'The Yogi who ever concentrates on and harmonises the self will reach infinite bliss by contact with Brahman.'

These seem to advise that a man should do nothing except thinking of Brahman and being Brahman, that he should have nothing to do for instance with the question whether the shield is all right, whether his arrows are sharp, whether his horses for the chariot are in good condition, etc. This looks patently absurd, for if you are in a field of battle, your arrows or shield and horses must be in proper condition. Else you will be failing in your duty to yourself and to the side to which you belong. Death and defeat will be the consequence of such neglect. Surely unreasonable courting of death and defeat is not counselled by Lord Krishna. Hence one is obliged to infer that Sri Krishna in the field of battle was forced to teach Arjuna many a truth not applicable to him immediately, and in certain cases not applicable to him at all.

Sri Krishna was compelled to lay down general principles of conduct for all classes and various circumstances. He pointed out the need for concentration in Yoga. Is it to be supposed that he wanted Arjuna straightaway to sit up on his

chariot and lose his mind in samadhi? Obviously not. In fact, he tells him, 'Stand up and fight' which is inconsistent with sitting and concentrating. The advice of Sri Krishna on the above matter of practising Ashtanga Yoga seems to be this. Arjuna is to practise this Ashtanga Yoga after the toils of war are over and when there is time for him to practise it. The advice is not confined to Arjuna. The advice is extended to all classes, and whoever is physically and mentally able to practise Ashtanga Yoga is advised to practise it, for it leads to realisation of perfect bliss. When one is so engaged, he has reached samatva. Friend and foe, high and low, do not exist for one in that condition. Heat and cold also to the extent possible must be ignored. Of course, if there is excess cold, namely, minus 60 degrees, round the yoga practitioner, that would make an end of the yoga practice and of the practitioner. If he is lost in a trance when a sudden cold sets in, the practitioner may not regain life enough to see that he has lost life in the course of his concentration. The net result is that, paying due regard to rules of commonsense, one should carry on the Ashtanga Yoga ending in samadhi and remain in samadhi as long as possible, practicable, and desirable. Flesh and blood being what they are, there comes an end to the practice of yoga also, and a man has to get up from his yoga practice and attend to the body.

*Yuktahara vihara* is the stanza wherein the Gita tells him that he has to attend to food, rest, exercise, etc., in order to avoid pain and grief. Similarly in the advice about treating high and low, virtuous, dangerous and calm animals or other surroundings as the same, commonsense must enable one to see when this advice can safely be followed and to what extent. One may be able to see that at certain times he can go on practising samatva without upsetting his own life career and without disregarding the duties that are incumbent upon him. Thus, carefully restricted samatva has its application to almost every one. More and more of samatva can be worked into one's life first by avoidances. The good and bad, the virtuous and vicious, are to be treated alike, is the motto of samatva. This is not immediately practicable but to some extent one can avoid doing harm or talking ill against those that are bad. For one's own peace of mind,

the advice is given that he should not poke his nose into others' affairs and go on praising one and decrying another.

*Nastuvita nanindeta kurvatah sadhu asadhuva*

*vadato gunadhoshabhyam varjetah samadruk munih.*

'Whether others talk or behave ill or well, the Muni bent on carrying on his samatva should say nothing, should neither praise nor blame' is the advice given by Lord Krishna to Uddhava showing how to apply samatva. This may be done in many circumstances, of course not by the magistrate who is called upon to decide whether a person charged with an offence is guilty and has to be punished. Samatva can be manifested more and more by increasing our powers of endurance. If we can easily put up with persons who talk wildly or with inclement weather or with hot atmosphere, we might gradually increase our powers of endurance. As for samatva between a clod of earth, stone (precious or not) and gold, one might, if he aspires very high, try it in slight degrees. '*Samaloshtha Asma Kanchanah*' is the ideal praised by Lord Krishna again and again. To carry out this idea, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa sat on the banks of the Ganges, took up a clod of earth (*loshta*) and took up some coins (*kanchana*) and exercised his mind in the faculty of belief repeating to himself "This earth and that kanchana or coin are the same', and threw them into the Ganges trying to develop equal indifference to both. Of course if clay is gone into the river, there is nothing to lose and no sorrow. Similarly if coins also go into the river, one must develop equal indifference and by repeatedly saying to oneself, 'I care a brass button whether these coins go or remain' and one might develop some degree of indifference. Even Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was struck with doubts about the correctness of this course. The thought struck him that Kanchana represents Lakshmi, Goddess of Wealth, who might get angry at being treated with contempt and who might inflict as a punishment dire poverty, etc., on him. There are numerous other difficulties besides Sri Ramakrishna's difficulty in the matter of such practice. But all these can be overcome and gradually overcome and increasing success is sure to attend upon one's efforts at increasing achievement of samatva. That is certainly a gain worth having. To that extent, the Gita advice

of *Samaloshtha Asma Kanchana* may be adopted. That is, the express advice may be treated as an ideal to be worked up to, and a life may be adopted taking one nearer and neareer to that goal or ideal.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **Sai Baba and the Future of Religion**

There are thousands, if not tens of thousands, who are perfectly convinced that Sai Baba was fully divine or, in the words of the orthodox, an Avatar, though, as soon as we use that term, troubles arise and dissidents come forward to differ. So the best thing to say is that Sai Baba had in him the all-round perfection of divine qualities in such a manner as to fulfil our idea of God. That is what Sri G.S. Khaparde said, and what many others have said, who are learned enough to draw distinctions between divinity and a divinely gifted human being. Metaphysics apart, let us confine ourselves to the usage of terms according to popular parlance and go on in this article with the explanation of Baba's position in respect of the future of religion.

So far as India itself is concerned, the future of religion in India is largely a question of the fusion of the two great trends which appear to be so widely different, namely, Hinduism and Islam. The differences have led frequently to the breaking of heads and burning of temples, and recently even the breaking up the political unity of the country. So the achievement of something like a basis for the unity of Hinduism and Islam is itself a very great and momentous task and may be justly viewed as affording a solution to the country's problem of fusing the two into one. So, we might first take the question of Hindu-Muslim religious differences, and see how far Sai Baba was able to draw these communities nearer so as to give some ground for hope that Islam and Hinduism might one day combine and produce a blend that will satisfy really earnest among the adherents of both religions, and form the foundation of India's main religion of the future. In India itself the Muslims are so numerous that any failure to take note of their religious needs in trying to shape the future of Indian religion must spell a failure. Happily for us, however, Sai Baba has chalked out some outlines which

give very good promise of a blending of these two. We shall see what history has to teach us about the blending of these two religions in the past.

Great souls have always existed who appreciated the advantage of fusion, and they worked hard to achieve success in this matter. Akbar's name must naturally be given the highest prominence in point of time and in point of width of views, as he was not merely an emperor with both Hindu and Muslim subjects, but one of the most liberal rulers that the world has ever seen. The idea that God is one, and therefore, people professing all religions should come together and worship Him in a common place with love and amity among them, being the children of same God, treating one another as brethren, was the noble idea of Akbar. This must always command the assent of every right thinking individual. The difficulty arises only when a thinker convinced of the above position as being right, tries to make others accept it and propound not an individual faith, but a popular formula for a popular religion that would please both these communities. Akbar did not, however, care to go into the metaphysics or the technique of this question, but did what was the most practical and best thing to do for the promotion of his object. He, as an emperor, commanded the obedience and allegiance of both the religionists and he ordered the leading followers of both religions to come together and worship God in a common place, and called the faith which he thus propounded '*Din Ilahi*' that is, God's religion. Every religion must be God's religion and the essence of all religions must be God's religion. God has no special religion.

Religion is that which binds, '*Re*' back and '*Ligo*' to bind. Religion is that which binds people back together in society for purposes of worship and other similar matters. Religion is a social phenomenon, and it necessarily includes something which will appeal to the average or even the lowest level of intellect prevalent in any society. The ideas of God that are found even in one religion, even at one age, widely vary, and the modes in which God is approached and people carry on their contact with or approach to God, are various, and it is no easy joke to unify religions even for the people of one country and one age. Yet,

Akbar attempted his task and by reason of his position and the excellence of his idea carried his point almost to success.

Unity of God is the central principle in both Hindu and Muslim religions, and the one God has always to be revered and adored by prayer for protecting oneself and one's dependants and country. For this purpose, therefore, Hindus and Muslims can always join, and in fact have often joined. In national calamities and crises, differences of opinion have not prevented people from joining together and praying to a common God for relief from great distress and peril. Similarly when an emperor ordered, people were able to join together and pray to a common father. For some time Akbar's experiment proved to be practical and successful. Unfortunately, his ideas and practice did not take root, and his successors had widely different ideas from his. Aurangzeb's policy was extremely opposite to his. Instead of promoting harmony between the two religions Aurangzeb's idea was to compel all his subjects to discard other religions to adopt one religion, namely, Islam. Historians agree that this was one of the chief causes of the collapse of the Moghul Empire in India. When we discover a mistake committed in the past, it is our duty to discover and adopt the correct policy.

"Live and let live; freedom to all people as far as possible to adopt their ideas of approach to God" must be the basis on which society must be founded. Any compulsion in religion will destroy religion and society also. This cardinal principle is noted to be one of the main features of Sai Baba's dealings with his multifarious devotees including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis, and others. Anything like compulsion or for that matter any attempt for conversion is absolutely destructive of the work of religion. We can have neither religion nor unity where compulsion is adopted. Conversion is very often the result of either compulsion or low motives, and Baba, who knew this fact very well, on one occasion when a Hindu convert to Islam was brought by Bade Baba to him saying, 'Baba, this man has been converted to Islam', struck him (the convert) on the cheek, and asked, 'Have you changed your father?' Changing one's father is absolutely unthinkable, and an absurd idea. Each religion makes God the father

of its followers, and when one has got a father according to accredited lines, which are useful, it looks absurd to think of changing either the physical father who begot one or the Universal Father that is adored in religion, So, Baba always dissuaded people from changing their religion either from Hinduism to Islam or from Islam to Hinduism or from Christianity to Hinduism, and *vice versa*. What is most important is not mere external conversion but conversion of the heart, which makes a man lose his sinful and bestial nature and climb up to Godhood. That real conversion is not called conversion by people because it generally has no external marks to denote it. Baba's object was that all people should be really converted and should have God in their hearts, and get firmly attached to God so that all of them- will be soaked through and through with the idea of God, and in consequence there will be no friction between one person soaked in God and another person soaked in God.

There can be no quarrel among religions so far as the essence is concerned. The quarrels are all about the externals. 'You wish to go to a temple. I wish to go to a Mosque. So, we cannot agree. You put on Namam vertically. I put on sandal or sacred ashes in parallel horizontals. So we cannot agree'. Can this be recorded as the correct attitude? Let every person sit quietly directing his mind to the greatness of God and the grand qualities of God and allow himself to be lost in them. Then there is no possibility of his quarrelling with any other person or any other person quarrelling with him. The result of contemplation of love for God is Love. If we go into the essence of religion, that is, if each tries to concentrate on God, the result will only be love and harmony and not a jarring set of crusades among people trying to trample on one another. Luckily wars of religion like the crusades are now things of the past. But what have succeeded them are wars for the sake of material aggrandizement, for getting colonies, and for conquests of population, for economic purposes, and these are quite as deadly in their effects as were of religion. If a discovery is made of a solution for the problem of difference of religions amongst mankind, it bids fair to solve also the problem of wars for pelf, for colonies, etc. We have to examine carefully into Sai's history to see what he has done, how far he was successful in promoting

harmony between individuals of the various groups that came to him, such as Hindus, Muhammadans, and Parsis, whether the solution found by him has worked well amongst his immediate followers, and whether that solution can be extended to other fields and to the entire world.

Let us now see what has been done by Baba. He was first worshipped by a handful of Hindus who treated him as God or Gurudeva, because he showed such wonderful powers over material nature. He converted water into oil and, therefore, the villagers of Shirdi were firmly convinced that he was not an ordinary human being but one gifted with divine qualities. Along with that, the exhibition of other chamatkars by Baba proved his possession of very vast powers though this was done only gradually. He, by a unique series of kind acts towards all, and especially the poor, the sick, the unfriended and the miserable, showed uniformly a golden heart of love towards all, treating every one, prince or peasant, pandit or rustic, Hindu or Muslim, on the same level. There was in him practically universal love combined with a sense of equality and equanimity, and utter absence of self. He had no family, no attachments, and the whole world was his kin.

*Ayam nijah perovaiti ganana laghu chetasam*

*Mahatmanastu..... vasudhaiva kutumbakam*

That is, it is the petty mind that considers whether any particular person is one's friend or a stranger. The great souls treat the entire world as a little family of their own. Baba was undoubtedly such a great soul from the very beginning and for this reason as well as on account of his chamatkars, increasing numbers began to worship him as God and called him their Gurudeva, their Ishta Devata. Now some would suppose this is only adding one more to the 33 crores of Gods that Hinduism recognises, and, therefore, giving more scope for difference. But luckily this "33 crores and 1st" God swallowed up all the 33 crores and showed the unity of God. He drew people to himself for granting them various reliefs and finally led them on to the one God who is nothing but Love, who is common not only to Hindus, but Muslims, Christians, Parsis and others also. He demonstrated to all that the only God that they could deal with was something visible,

something in human form, something with wonderful love and power and mercy, so that they were compelled to bow down to it and accept it for their good in every department of life. So, Hindus, Christians, Muslims, and all practically worshipped him. However, as the semetic religions like Islam and Christianity forbade people from accepting any one as God barring the God that they proclaimed, Christians and Muslims mostly did not avow him to be God nor adopt the external processes of worship which the Hindus always adopt. But this really does not matter, for the essence of holding on to God is prayer to God and getting relief. This, the Christians and Muslims did not hesitate to do. They had their distresses, and because they were *Aartas*. They prayed for relief before Baba when he was in the flesh or at his tomb when he left the body and got the relief, proving to them that they were really appealing to a divine source. So in effect they treated him as God, but would not confess that they were treating him as God on account of their dogmas and doctrines. All the same, in effect and in reality, all persons bowing to him and appealing to him for aid in their extremities were adopting him practically as their God and revering him as their *Ishta Devata*. Whether they used the name *Avalia* or Guardian Saint or *Ishta Devata* does not really matter.

Unity was brought about and a common bond was created by Baba by his acting as the common Father of all. Baba said, 'I am the father of you all, so you should not say *that*'. G.G. Narke, M.A., M.Sc., an England returned scholar, said Baba was a man and not God. This was reported to Baba. Then Baba pointed out that what that learned scholar said was true from the material standpoint. That is, if you regard the Baba body as Baba, it is a human body, and, therefore, there is no mistake in saying that Baba was man. But it is a terrible mistake for people to view Baba as man, especially, if they wanted Baba's divine help. Divine help was not coming from the muscles, nerves, and bones of the human body, but was coming from the spirit, and that spirit was divine. So, Baba told them, 'You should not say *that* (that is, that I am a mere physical human being). For I am your father, and you have all to get your things from me'. It is by treating him as God that Ramasami Chetti, Abdul Kadar Saheb, Joseph Ransome and other

persons could get what they wanted; that is, it is the divinity in him that must be kept in mind, and the material body must be put aside and completely forgotten in order to get one's relief. Therefore, Baba pointed out the correct attitude to take was not that Sai Baba was the body of  $3^{1/2}$  cubits height which they saw, but the divine spirit which was living within that body, and which could work at any place far away from that body. Baba exhibited such power that sitting at Shirdi he could influence men and things thousands of miles away and draw spirits to him at the moment of their death in order to give them the protection they needed, or the help they wanted. It is this Baba spirit that we call Baba, that sensible people will call Baba, and not the mere Baba body. When once this view is accepted, then the system built up by Baba, of unity among all persons approaching Baba for various sorts of relief from the common father must be regarded as a remarkable achievement, an achievement not merely for the individuals but for the entire groups, for countries and for the world. On the basis of attachment to this common father Baba, Brahmins and Sahebs, Chettis and Parsees all combine and go together and act like brethren. That is what they did when Baba's chavadi procession took place and what they do now when it takes place at Shirdi. All communities join together in paying their respects to this Mighty Master and, therefore, Baba furnished the clue to the unity of religions amongst his immediate followers. The clue is, 'Do not stress the external observances. Externals no doubt differ. But stress the essence of all religions, namely, the approach to God and the achievement thereby of the satisfaction of your various needs, and the conquest of various obstacles for the elevation of your nature gradually, further and further upward, till you lose your self by contact with the feet of God'. This is a common plank, which is furnished by Baba, which has been used time and again by various people. Hindus who have given statements to this author and others, mostly show their acceptance of this view. Even a few Muslims who have accepted Swami Vivekananda as their guide adopt the same view.

Thus Baba has furnished a basis on which Hinduism and Islam can combine. That is Hindus and Muslims must make up their minds to revere God in

essence. As God in essence cannot be seen or sensed, that divinity should be approached through human personalities exhibiting divine powers in wonderful profusion as in the case of Sai Baba. One may ask how one Sai Baba can suffice to leaven the whole world; but let us look at facts. One Sai Baba has now produced hundreds of Sai Babas. There are many Hindu and muslim saints all over the country who act upon the principles on which Baba acted, and have amongst their followers both Hindus and Muslims. In almost every District we now find Mulsim Saints who are catholic enough to allow Hindus to continue their observances, and yet approach them as their Godmen. These are slowly leavening the whole Indian society. The adoption by a few individuals of such an attitude towards such Saints may not suffice to convert the entire country to the cause of religious unity. There will always be people who will rejoice in differences and who can never rise above the existing level of thought prevalent in their particular community. But when any one says that 'No man can rise above that level', they are committing a huge mistake.

History shows us how in the past vast upheavals have often taken place and how masses themselves have been attracted and led to adopt mere doctrines, dogmas and religions. One great powerful Sai can by his perfectly divine powers stamp the entire world with the impiess of his own views. With the advance of time, the numbers that follow the great saint will be increasing largely and it will soon be so large that others will actually drift into union with them. Mankind has no power of resistance against divine currents. This is proved by the history of great saints in every land. Thus, we have a fair basis for hope that the present Sai and the future Sais that might develop out of the present Sai will furnish the entire world with a uniform religion, in some form, some shape, and some beliefs that we cannot now define or describe. There is excellent ground for hoping that this achievement may come to pass, and we may rest in confidence that Sai's spirit will accomplish the same.

## CHAPTER VII

### **The Goal of Life, the Goal of Knowledge : What is it ?**

This is one of the problems discussed by intellectual workers on purely rationalistic lines. The author of Thirukkural says that it is only true knowledge which enables you to see the Reality behind the final outward forms of things, which means the truth which remains after the analysis of the entire Triad, namely, Self, World, and God; that is Brahman. We need not enter into questions of Dvaita or Advaita though there are people who say that to deny the separate existence of a human soul is to commit suicide, that on ultimate analysis two things remain, namely, the self undestroyed and the God whom the self reaches. There are also many other divergent views. The ultimate truth is complex and not capable of a simple statement, and thus the intellectuals go on contradicting and fighting. How does Baba deal with his devotees when they are faced with this problem?

Chandorkar and other graduates who had studied philosophy, Sankara's commentary on the Gita and other works, were confronted with these problems, and sometimes they discussed these at the wada at Shirdi. Baba did not profess to be a University professor offering solutions for problems to be published to the world, but dealt with each man individually as he approached him as Guru. Baba's solution was always on the lines of getting over theoretical difficulties by adherence to practical methods. By sticking to Baba with full faith, these problems could be solved.

Unless there was the proper approach, there was no solution. Baba indicated this view in the way in which he dealt with a sceptic like the Station Master of the Valambi railway station. That man had no belief in Baba. But having been persuaded by Das Ganu that Baba was a great soul with wonderful powers, he just prepared to accept Das Ganu's invitation so that he might go and see Baba for himself before he judged about him. When the Valambi Station Master and Das Ganu came to Shirdi, the all-knowing Baba was behaving peculiarly. He took up a number of pots, washed them one after another and placed them mouth downwards, which seemed to be quite the reverse of what

one should do, and what one does usually. The Valambi Station Master was impatient and asked Das Ganu, 'What is the meaning of all this procedure of Baba?' Das Ganu asked Baba, and Baba's reply was. 'This is the way in which people approach me. Only when the vessel is placed with mouth upwards, it can receive anything. But this is the way in which people approach me, with mouth downwards'. The hit was not quite intelligible to the Valambi Station Master. Receptivity meant some degree of faith and respect for the person approached, so that the person approached could pour into the approaching person some seeds of instruction, edification or other useful teaching. But the Valambi Station Master was quite innocent of any faith or regard for Baba, and could not derive any benefit from Baba. But Baba's point was quite clear.

To solve any problems connected with one's spiritual progress, one must be in dead earnest and approach some person whom he has got regard for or faith in and then patiently wait for the solution of his intellectual or other problems. Baba occasionally used even accidental chances to furnish further illumination on this matter. After 1910, Dixit and some other friends wanted to leave Shirdi, and asked permission of Baba to go. Baba said, 'you may go'. Then a devotee asked, 'Baba, where is one to go?' Baba at once gave a new turn to the talk, and made it educative. Baba's answer was, 'Up', that is 'Above this,' which obviously meant, 'Above the present wordly level in which one is grovelling with so many attachments and repulsions, sorrows and joys, and so much of confusion, without any calm perception of the underlying reality.' Then the question was asked, 'What is the way (to go up)?' Baba's answer was, 'There are plenty of ways proceeding from each place. For you here, there is a way leading from here. But the way is rugged, there are tigers and bears on the route.' Baba was talking in symbolic language. There were no bears at Shirdi nor tigers. But what he meant was, 'There were obstructions on the way to one's spiritual progress, which are as fierce and terrible as tigers and bears.'

It was just then that H.S. Dixit intervened, and said, "But, Baba, if one has a guide with him?" Baba answered. 'If one has a guide with him, then there is no difficulty. Then the tigers and bears move aside. If there is no guide, there is also

a deep yawning pit on the way, and there is the danger of falling into it'. During the discourse Anna Saheb Dabolkar was present, and he had been debating once, whether a Guru was necessary at all for one's spirirutal progress. Dabolkar felt that this was the instruction given to him, that a Guru was essential and useful to overcome obstacles that would otherwise hamper one's spiritual progress. The word 'Guide' here meant 'Guru'. Baba's reference to the deep yawning pit meant 'hell'. So Baba drove once again the much needed lesson that unless one got a Guru, one would make no progress at all, or in the language of Kabir, '*Guru Vina Kona Bhatave Vat*' That is, 'unless there is a Guru who is to show the way?'

Baba again and again pointed out that the solution to one's intelletual riddles, conundrums and mazes, lies in the practical step of summoning up faith and reverence and love to a Guru, who will himself thereafter solve all problems, remove all difficulties, and drive off all tigers and bears from the route, and save one from falling in the yawning pit. Baba's metaphors must have been reported or in any case had far reaching results. Upasani Baba who came to Shirdi in 1911, took Baba for his guide and got his help, especially, by silent instruction through visions. In one of the visions, Upasani found that as he was passing on, there was a deep pit, which afterwards he learnt was hell, and that when he approached it, hands came out of that hell and clutched at his feet, and tried to pull him down. He had sufficient grace to remember his Guru, and said, 'Let go, let go. If you don't let go, I will tell Sai Baba'. The remembrance of the Guru knocks off all vasanas and tendencies which lead to hell. Thus Upasani's feet were released from the clutch of the hands from hell. Upasani was then told that it was a mistake to go very near the brink of that pit. It was the Guru's grace that saved him from that pit.

This is allegorical or symbolical, but, in point of fact it was this same Guru Sai Baba's grace that saved Rao Bahadur H.V. Sathe from the brink of hell, the sin of immorality with a lady of doubtful reputation at the shala at Shirdi. On that occasion Sathe felt like a thief caught red-handed. He repented immediately his stupidity and he resolved never again to call at that woman's place or to commit

such a sin. So, Baba did really save this devotee of his from falling into the yawning pit, and thus showed that he was the Guru who would take a man on to the goal of his life. If a man commits such mortal sins as adultery or debauchery, he can never be fit to receive the higher truths which alone can take him on to the purity, detachment, and love of God that ensure salvation and liberation. Thus, what Baba spoke to Dabolkar was illustrated in the case of Sathe. But this was not the only instance in which Baba helped either Sathe or others. It is not merely *kama* that degrades the soul and takes it to hell. *Kroda*, anger, or hatred does the same. Baba in the case of Sathe did another piece of signal service. Sathe had purchased a plot of land at or near Shirdi, and wanted to go and see the place. He brought a cart and wanted his wife to get into it so that they might go and see the place. But Dada Kelkar, his father in-law, who arranged the sale, was anxious that claims to that land should not be put forward by Sathe's Jnatis or next of kin, as they would claim it if they came to know that the land was purchased by him. So, he had told his daughter not to go with her husband to see the land. So, when Sathe wanted his wife to get into the cart, she would not come. Then at once Sathe got angry, and took the horse whip in his hand, and wanted to whip his wife, for her impertinent refusal. He had lifted his hand, when Sri Sai Baba, who was watching the whole scene, unseen, from his own Mosque, sent up Megha to hurry up and bring Sathe to Baba. So, as the whip was lifted, Megha said; 'Baba wants you', and down fell the whip. Sathe went to Baba. Baba there softened Sathe, and told him that there was no necessity for him to see the land, for the land was there all the time. Sathe found how Baba had saved him once again from an act of gross cruelty to his wife, which would also be one of the sins leading to hell. Conquest of temper is essential for one's religious progress.

## **CHAPTER VIII**

### **Sri Sai Baba and National Unity**

The peaceful atmosphere of Shirdi (Sai Baba's village) was never disturbed by politics or other controversies, In his own quiet unostentatious way, Baba was however laying the solid foundations of Indian unity and affording both

by example and precept valuable suggestions for India's welfare. The greatest stumbling block in its way was the difficulty of yoking together the two great communities to a common cause and making them pull in unison and amity in spite of wide difference in religious observances and doctrines. Baba showed his devotees the essence of religion and gave them a common bond - regard or love - for the same Guru Deva (Sai) who was practically the great Controller—a *Botthe Chalthe Dev*, a talking and moving God.

While at Bombay and in other places heads were being broken and temples, mosques and houses were burnt down, at Shirdi each of these groups built or lent a hand in building other's temples, mosques and houses. A Hindu inspector gave Baba stones for the reconstruction of his Mosque; and Baba gifted them all away for the reconstruction of the Hindu temples in the village. The Hindus later collected thousands of rupees and reconstructed his mosque. A devotee of Sai Baba, viz., Sri Upasani Maharaj, put up at Sakori (3 miles off Shirdi) a neat little mosque, within twenty yards of the local Siva and Maruti temples without disturbing public or private peace. Hindus and Moslems have always joined together for processions and celebrations in honour of Sai Baba, and for prayer at his tomb; and both partook of the vegetarian offerings (Naivedya) brought by either to Baba, after due pronouncement of namaz and fatiah.

Sai Baba was the living emblem of Hindu Muslim unity. His life and teachings were the strongest and the most forcible exposition of the underlying unity of all communities and creeds of India. Till the last moment of his fleshy life no one could be quite sure whether Baba was a Hindu or a Muslim by birth or breeding or profession (Baba professed no religion). There were elements of both; so, both so closely intermixed in him that a conclusion was not easy. People nevertheless drew their conclusions and Baba laughed such conclusions to scorn.

In 1916 Dasara, when Baba was contemplating giving up his fleshy body, he threw up all his clothes into the fire and stood stark naked and then said, 'you worthless fellows, try and find out whether I am a Hindu or a Muslim', for perfect

nudity was necessary to enable a person to find out whether Baba underwent circumcision or not. Nana Chandorkar thought that he was not circumcised and some others thought he was. Having been brought up in his earliest years by a Muslim fakir, the probabilities will distinctly favour circumcision. But whether there was circumcision or not, it was to Baba perfectly irrelevant and insignificant and also an absurd matter to enquire into. The question relating to circumcision is only a question relating to a part of Baba's body. Similarly some noticed that he had bored ears. And others noticing them were perfectly sure that his ears were not bored. Whether the ears were bored or whether there was circumcision was only relevant for a discussion about his being a Hindu or Muslim. Once the question of community is shoved aside as being irrelevant or absurd, the further examination of those matters can only be done by "worthless people" as Baba called them. Baba almost up to the last did not care to give any information on the question as to the circumstances of his birth and as to the ceremonies and samskaras he underwent or did not undergo, and he evidently treated the discussion as being flippant as to whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim, because that would arise only if his nature was human. Baba had perfect and clear consciousness of himself as not the body, but as the spirit, merely utilising that body for certain purposes. He had rīnanubandha with many and these he drew to himself and wished to give them the greatest benefit by contact with him, and that benefit could come only if his fleshy body was ignored and his spirit was recognised as the spirit of a Samarta Sadguru or actually of Iswara or Allah. That is why Baba was saying, '*Maim Atlahhum*, I am Lakshminarayan', so as to impress particular devotees that he was the divine spirit in the particular forms they recognised as God. He also showed in his own body the forms of Vittal, Rama, Datta, Maruti and others, to convince them of his divine nature. Therefore, when this had the effect (as in the case of the South African doctor) of convincing the devotee that Baba was (and is) God, a further discussion whether he was a Hindu God or a Miihammadan God is most ridiculous. Baba wanted to prevent people's minds from running in such absurd and ruinous directions. Therefore he discouraged all investigations into the origin of the body, etc., not only about

himself, but also about saints in general. Also Kabir has a *dohra* (couplet) saying that the conditions of the saints' birth should not be enquired into. Above all there is the danger that such investigations are generally productive of more harm than good.

Notwithstanding all that has been said above, a very large number of people still felt anxious to find out whether Baba was a Hindu or a Muslim. This pernicious habit persists and hence we have to take notice of it. A particular bhakta, who was favoured highly by Baba, still believes that Baba was a Muslim, and he wonders how anybody could take him to be a Brahmin; and his association of Muhammadanism with Baba is greatly detrimental to his bhakti. This sort of classification of Baba as belonging to one caste or another is the result of one's own *dehabhimana* i.e, the idea that one is one's body, and that one is of superior Brahmin caste in Hindu religion. The absurdity of these ideas lingering in the mind of a person who aims at absorption in God (*poorna laya*) was pointed out by a very great sadhu with wonderful powers at Nanded. That sadhu told the above mentioned devotee, 'shall I point out to you what your *'abhimana'* or egotism was? Your Guru was Sai Baba. From his feet he made Ganga flow out. You had that Ganga in your hand. And what did you do with it? You barely sprinkled it on your head, and you would not put it into your mouth, look at this *abhimand*<sup>1</sup>, To fill up the blanks in that Sadhu's statement, we may say that that devotee considered that he had the benefit of receiving Ganga from the feet of a *Muslim* Maha Vishnu, which should not, however, be allowed to taint his pure Brahminical lips. Nothing can be more absurd than such an idea, and yet the idea was entertained and perhaps continued for decades.

The fact is that prejudices die hard, and it is the fact that even enlightened devotees could not give up prejudices that makes this author proceed further in this chapter and deal with the question of Sai Baba's caste, and to point out that the answer of S. B. Dhumal as to Baba's caste to the European District Magistrate is the only answer that can be given by any person worthy of the name of a devotee of Sai Baba or even by a judge in a court of law. Dhumal answered that 'Baba is neither Hindu nor Muslim but above both'. Of course

S.B.Dhumal had no necessity to discuss further the question of what Baba did to solve the national problem of Hindu-Muslim unity. Now in this chapter we have to deal with it and, therefore, we shall point out, rather against our will, the Hindu-Muslim features in Baba, and how there was a perfect blending of those features in his appearance, in his mosque, in his behaviour, in his teaching, and in everything with which he was connected.

Baba said that he was Kabir in a former janma and that Akbar, the great emperor, stood in awe of him. Baba carried out the ambition of Akbar to unite Hindus and Muslims. This he carried out to a considerable extent. And he took Akbar's work also many steps further, Kabir lived in the time of Sher Shah (15th and 16th centuries) and his ideas were not as advanced as those found in modern days. Baba fully absorbed the modern spirit, and understood the conditions of India. Baba declared that in the first great war of Indian independence, he had been in the army with the Rani of Jhansi. That is, he was a fighter for Indian independence in 1857. But in his life at Shirdi, there was no politics. He never discussed politics even when E.G. Tilak or G.S. Khaparde came to him. He always encouraged patriotism, keeping it far away from controversial politics. As to the question of Hindu-Muslim unity, any person carefully studying the subject would see that Hindu-Muslim unity is the one great desideratum to make India strong and prosperous. Baba also saw it, and so he laid the foundations of Hindu-Muslim unity. We shall show how first in his body, next in his life, thirdly in his mosque, fourthly in his teachings and lastly in all other matters, Baba brought out this unity to the fore and worked for its consummation.

Taking first his body, though Baba did not want us to discuss his body, there is not a particle of doubt that Baba's ears were bored, and this is corroborated by his statement made to Mahlsapathy that his parents were Brahmins of Patri in the Nizam's state. Baba added that when he was a tiny infant he was handed over to a fakir by his Brahmin parents. Here is the first proof that Baba's life was to be one of fusion of Hinduism with Islam. The fakir who took him appears to have been a highly advanced soul, evidently a Sufi of

the highest grade. Baba, whenever he referred to God or Guru-God, or the fakir (God), evidently meant the fakir who must have first acted as his father, Guru, and everything to him. From him he picked up his idea of God and the essential virtues of vairagya and complete dedication of life to the cause of God that characterised his entire life. After a few years the fakir died, and under his orders, his widow handed Baba over to Gopal Rao Deshmukh, a pre-eminent saint, who had vast wealth, power and military prowess. In fact he acted as the Governor of Jintur Parganna, which he wrested from Muslim hands, but at the same time, he was a great devotee of God Venkatesa at Tirupathi whom he worshipped at home also. He thoroughly merged himself in Tirupathi Venkatesa. The powers of Venkatesa flowed through this royal saint's person and his touch cured blindness. He drove away devils and Brahma Rakshasas and achieved many marvels set out earlier in this same volume. Therefore, Baba was again brought into contact with the highest spiritual perfection that a Hindu bhakta was capable of attaining which in no way differs from highest Sufism. Baba refers to this Guru as Venkusa with great affection time and again and shows that his marga with this Guru was the Universal religion of love. Beasts can also understand love and Baba was thoroughly soaked in love for the Guru. The Guru loved him intimately. This Guru bhakthi is of the essence in all religions, especially in the religion in which Baba grew, and through which he attained all the wonderful powers he had. He declared that he became what he was (with all siddhis at his command) through the grace of his Guru, and that the love he and his Guru felt for each other was intense. Therefore, from the very beginning Hindu-Muslim elements were combined so far as externals were concerned. So far as the internal state of the soul was concerned, the common factor of all religions, namely, the idea that God is love, that the human being is a spark from that God, and that he should get back to God through that love, was the thing on which he was nourished, through which he became perfect. Therefore, Sai by such a training was developed and shaped into the perfection of humanity and the perfection of Sainthood. He became one with God and a Samartha Sadguru of all those who could make use of him as such. This became pronounced only in later life.

When he parted from the Guru he was merely sent away with a brick and a cloth and also blessings of his Guru for perfection. He was mingling once again with fakirs, as a fakir among fakirs, and wandering here and there, for how long and in what places, no one can say. Shirdi became his final residence, and his earlier years at Shirdi were spent merely as a nameless fakir. But when once his powers of Siddhi and his kindness became clear to persons competent to understand them, that is, first to the Hindu sadhus who met him and later to ordinary folk also, especially by his power of giving blessings for issue, etc., people swarmed to his feet, and he was compelled to allow them to worship him as God, first individually and then collectively. His position as a Samartha Sadguru was established decades after his arrival at Shirdi. All the while, and even after this position was established, he was carrying on his mission of love, love primarily to those who were connected with him by rinanubandha and next to every one of his devotees. In his samatva, he loved all and served all, and lived merely to bless humanity with his powerful personality and the attention he could pay simultaneously to thousands of people in thousands of places. Such a person naturally was in a better position than others to carry out his mission of life.

One important aspect of the working of that love is what we are considering in this chapter, namely, the achieving of Hindu-Muslim unity. The bickering and difference between Hindus and Muslims when he first began his life at Shirdi, were as pronounced, though superficial, there as elsewhere. To unite Hindus and Muslims is a task of very great difficulty, for in externals they differed so much i.e. in dress, in personal habits and the formal practice of religion. They had a tendency to keep apart, a tendency which the Britisher who ruled the country took very good care to strengthen. To work in the face of all these and to promote Hindu-Muslim unity was a very difficult task but Baba's method of work was very subtle. Nobody could see what he was working at and how he was carrying out his aims. His method of love is unexceptionable and nobody could suspect what would be the consequences of that love. Persons loved by Baba, whether Hindus, Muslims, or Christians, came to regard each

other as brothers; they were all "Children of Dwarakamayee", as he called them, and they were all being cared for by Baba. This one fact that Hindus, Muslims, Christians and persons of all religions were loved by him equally and without difference, tended strongly in favour of establishing Hindu Muslim unity.

Baba took good care to see that there should be no such bitterness as would be caused by conversions or intolerance. He put down intolerance and conversions. On one occasion when Bade Baba (Malegaon fakir) introduced to him one Ibrahim as a recent convert to Islam, Baba slapped (Ibrahim) on the cheek and asked him 'have you changed your father?' and he would not allow him to come into the mosque, Baba brought together Hindus and Muslims in his mosque. There was Agni worship performed by the Hindus in the mosque and Baba ordered S.M. Naik to pour in his oblations of rice with ghee, which Parsis and others also worshipped, and the udhi or ashes of which were distributed to all. There was also the Tulsi Brindavan in the mantap (front hall) round which pious Hindu ladies made their circumambulation (pradakshinas). For the Muhammadans there was the central pulpit in the western well with three or four steps in it, on which the preacher would stand, if there was a preacher, and lamps would be placed to light up the place (mosque). This is called Mimbar. As for the external appearance of the building, there were small minarets conforming to ancient Muslim tradition and Saracen religious architecture. As for what went on in the building, there was the practice of both Hindu and muslim scriptures being read. During the day Hindus performed their worship with "*artis*" (waving of light) based on Pandharpur practice to the accompaniment of loud music as at Pandharpur, including the beating of drums. But there were also times when the Muslims came in for their Idga worship in front of it and the recital by zealous Muslims at night of the Kalam or Shariat and the frequent reading near the dhuni of the Koran by Abdul, Baba's bodyguard and companion. During the day after the "*arti*" there were generally Tukaram gathas, Bhagavatha, or other puranas read and bhajans carried on. Thus both communities had their desired religious readings and practices without coming into conflict with each other.

As for the more esoteric, more individual or spiritual benefit, Baba who was the antaryami (inner soul) of all, suited himself to the circumstances of each, and gave occasional direction or advice to Hindus to go on with their Rama Mantra or Guru Charitra Parayana or Bhavartha Ramayana and Bhagavata and Jnaneswari, the well known Maharatti commentary on Bhagavad Gita, following the lines of Sri Sankara's philosophy. At night arti there were special references to Jnaneswar, Tukaram, and other great Maharatta Saints. Baba was the central object of worship while the Maharatta and other saints were appealed to. Nobody felt that there was anything inconsistent or self-conflicting in these courses, for with Baba the one common principle was that all religions are true and each man should keep up conservatively to his own creed, faith, *Guru sampradaya*, i.e. Guru's tradition and practice. This is the principle on which all religions can unite. Differences there are bound to be amongst men as long as human nature continues to be what it is. The principle of variation is found in humanity as in other creatures coupled also with the principle of an underlying unity or uniformity. If due to lack of love and sympathy, the differences are allowed to poison the feelings of each towards the other, then there is conflict, individual conflict, sectarian conflict. But if there is one guiding principle of love enforced especially by a Guru who is the soul of Love like Sai Baba, then there is no chance of these natural differences creating any bitterness.

The feeling of love flourishes amidst differences just as love flourishes amidst differences of sex, temperament and unequal equipment of intellects. Sai Baba made people tolerant towards each other and prevented bickerings and conflicts not only by his words but also by his example. Thus the principle of love pervaded the atmosphere in Baba's mosque. That is the principle which can unite not only all religions but all groups. Even economic differences can be dissolved by that golden solvent of love. Mankind can become one family and achieve the socialistic ideal only on the principle of love. Baba, therefore, paved the way for the solution of the numerous differences that now tear mankind into warring groups. This unity of religions is not a new idea. Eknath, Namdev, Kabir and others had worked at it each in his own way. Guru Nanak was also in his own

way working for the same. It was left to Baba to complete their work. His admirers and worshippers in Maharashtra could not at first think that outside Maharashtra anybody would care to worship Baba. But to their astonishment, Sai worship and the admiration for his doctrines and methods are now covering the entire country from Cape Comorin to the Himalayas and from Assam to Bombay. He was thus the creator of intercommunal unity, and no doubt he was also the emblem of it. The task of uniting the highly advanced religious exponents of each religion into one is not so easy as the task of uniting the masses. The masses come in when they see that a weird and impartial God-man like Sai Baba, whether proclaimed an Avalia or an Avtar, is working for their good, and they unite easily into a harmonious group. That was how the Kabir Panthis were formed including the Hindu-Muslim elements in it and ignoring differences. Round Sai Baba also, these elements united and the number of worshippers has grown and is vigorously growing. But the ultimate work of importance would appear to be getting together the highly advanced thinkers and heads of religions to accept the idea of unity. Even here Baba was successful. Differences between religion and religion are found to be matters of doctrine and dogma. All religions must unite and do unite in adoration of one common God whose nature is love, and who with his limitless power creates all and loves all he creates equally. Baba made no distinction between Hindu, Muslim and Christian, and treated them all as his children. All religions were united before Baba. Love is a principle on which all religions must unite. That love gets identified with God and perfection in man. Baba achieved in himself that perfection, and therefore was able truly to declare that he had reached the highest *Anandam Brahmeti Vyajanath*. Baba showed that he was the Paramatma of all, that he was the Antaryami of all, and that he had in him perfect bliss, which we call Satchidananda. To Muslims Baba is the Sufi. Kabir panthis being part of the contributors to Sufism recognised Baba as the perfect Sufi. Hindus including the most advanced in Bhakti and Jnana recognised him as the perfection of divinity or Satchidananda. Therefore believers in the principle of love as embodied in Godhood found it demonstrated in Baba. No doubt, success in this is not

achieved in a day, but he has laid solid foundations for the edifice of inter-religious unity and, as time advances and as other world movements also advance, Baba's pioneering efforts will be recognised and followed by the masses and also thinkers. This is imminent; one can see glimpses of it even at present. Let none think that Baba is gone and has ceased to work. See the Chapter on latest lilas. That enables us to see that Baba is the emblem and cause of the unity of religions in India and the world. Regarding world unity, we are reminded of Abdul Bahai who attempted in 1830-40 to make people accept him as the Messiah of unity and to establish one religious, economic and social order into which all countries will fit in their systems harmoniously in accordance with his principles and directions. But history records the failure. Baba's work was similar to Bahai's, i.e. promoting love, cooperation and harmony. But Baba was preeminently practical and he saw with his wonderful prescience how limited the progress will be at the outset and for a considerable time; and Baba laid the foundations of future World Unity in all essential matters to the extent that was possible.

## **Chapter IX**

### **Baba - Human and Divine - Humour**

Baba's personality was always puzzling to those who made an effort to understand him fully instead of being content with accepting one part of him as Baba and ignoring the rest. The latter is the wisest course for the majority and is ordinarily adopted by most of his devotees. But the more intellectual and the more curious amongst those approaching Baba make an effort to understand him and try to grasp as much of the facets of his complete personality as is possible. There they meet with apparent contradictions and mutual inconsistencies, and they are baffled. So much so, a Parsi doctor, named Dr. Jal, told this writer not to attempt to understand or write the life of Satpurushas. He said it was simply impossible to understand them. Evidently in his own case, he had tried and failed and was impressed by his own failure as to give the kindly advice to others not to waste their mental efforts in trying to grasp a Satpurusha's personality. In point of fact when we talk of ourselves or others, we go on understanding more and more

of both and with a working knowledge of both get on in the world. Similarly in respect of a Satpurusha's personality, we must try and understand more and more, for it is our nature to desire more and more of such knowledge. When a person is attempting to place before the public a picture of the life and lilas of a great Purusha, it is incumbent on him to present all sides of the Divine Personality. The task is difficult on account of the various apparent inconsistencies that are bundled together in the personality, but all the same we shall attempt it as we have already stated in an earlier portion of the book.

Emerson has stated that the human and divine are not separate, but rather various grades of one continuous series. When qualities arrive at a certain stage and are of a certain sort, people declare, 'This is divine', for they are far above the average human. Whether the superiority is in respect of power or of kindness or other qualities, the words are uttered at once, 'These are divine qualities'. Yet it is a human person that exhibits those qualities. We are not at present concerned with the intricacies of Christian theology, and we are at liberty to take Jesus Christ as a human person and point out the divine qualities in him. Tennyson wrote of him in the opening lines of 'In Memoriam', 'Thou seemest human and divine', and many readers would certainly note the human features of Jesus Christ as beaming out of the gospel, touched not infrequently with the divine features.

Similarly those who came in contact with Sai Baba have come in contact with his human peculiarities and the divine peculiarities mixed up so very closely that the two seem to be inseparable. So, 'Thou seemest human and divine' may be applied to Sai Baba as well as to Jesus Christ. We may note in passing that this combination, far from being an undesirable mixture, is a necessary one. If some being existed with all divine perfections only, human beings would not be able to approach or appreciate him. It is the fact that this Satpurusha has his human body, human touches, and human limitations that make us feel that he is also a human being, and we draw inferences about his inner nature from knowledge of our own nature and that of our fellow beings; we have the confidence that we have understood the nature and qualities of the Satpurusha

to some extent at least, and, we, are, therefore, emboldened in approaching and dealing with such a Satpurusha. Unless there were such human features and limitations, this personality would be of no use to us. That is why, avatars are described in the Hindu scriptures as promoting human welfare. They combine human and divine features. Especially in the case of Sri Rama, the seventh Avatar, the human features come out constantly, and yet are supported by the divine features so as to enable the Rama personality to be of great service to us, spiritual and temporal. Rama dhyana, Rama smarana, and Rama Lila, in general are found very useful for spiritual and temporal purposes alike on account of the human element in Rama. Similarly in Sai Baba, who is often termed Sai Rama, (partly because Ram Navami was chosen by Baba to be the day for his Urus—annual festival—to be celebrated at Shirdi and partly because he showed himself as Rama) his human elements and divine elements are both mixed up so finely as to help to understand him and approach him. Therefore we shall proceed to set out in the following paragraphs some of his human characteristics and show how these combined with the divine elements in him, and how the two, far from being inconsistent, are harmoniously blended in our impression of the Great One. Humour is a distinct human quality. And of all Baba's human qualities, his sense of humour was the most outstanding. Baba's sense of humour was of a very peculiar kind being at first hardly intelligible to people around him. The humour consisted in there being two applications for the words he uttered, one being patent and the other often being discovered after some time and enquiry. We shall give some examples.

In the case of one G.D. Pelaspi, who approached Baba, the latter according to his custom of revealing his *antarjnana* about the visitor so as to infuse faith in him, mentioned the fact that the trouble of Pelaspi was that a debtor of his, named Bapu Saheb, was delaying and evading payment of Rs. 4,000 due from him to Pelaspi. So Baba said when Pelaspi came, 'What is Bapu Saheb doing?' Some one present said, thinking that Baba referred to Bapu Saheb Jog, 'He is sleeping'. Baba said, 'When he comes here, beat him. He owes me Rs. 4,000 and is delaying payment'. People fancied that Baba was

angry with Bapu Saheb Jog for the alleged non-payment of debt to him. But Baba was referring only to the Pandit of Pelaspi. Pelaspi understood Baba's words well enough, and took Baba's words as a good augury that pressure would be brought upon his debtor to make the payment quickly. But the others who misunderstood Baba to refer to the poojari of Baba, namely, Bapu Saheb Jog, informed him of Baba's words, and he was very much upset by Baba's statement, for he did not owe Rs. 4000 to Baba, and he said, 'The claim is unjust'. But Baba was enjoying the fun. Similarly Baba used the words, Tatyā, Bapu, Vani', etc., referring to particular persons or particular sorts of persons. People who heard him could not make out the real reference. Baba enjoyed the fun.

On one occasion, when Shama was bitten by a serpent, he was advised to go to the Bairoba temple to which people usually resorted when bitten by cobras. But he said that his temple was Baba's place, and he ran up to Baba. Baba had wonderful powers of curing cobra bite and other poisons. But when Shama came to climb up the steps of the Dwarakamayee, Baba said, 'Do not get up, Brahmin. Get back. Descend *Hat Mage, Hat Mage*'. Shama was shocked. Here was his hope in Baba, and Baba was asking him not to get up but to get down. Baba enjoyed his confusion for a moment and then asked him to get up. Baba said 'Come up. The fakir (God) is kind. You will be cured<sup>1</sup>', He then told people to take Shama home and see that he did not go to sleep, but was kept awake for 24 hours till the poison could be completely absorbed in or expelled from the system. The humour in Baba's words was in the fact that the words 'Do not get up, Brahmin' appeared to be addressed to the Brahmin Shama, when 'Brahmin' was used in the vocative case. But that word was used by Baba in the accusative case. The words were addressed not to the Brahmin but to the cobra poison, and the cobra poison was directed by command of Baba not to go up the Brahmin, that is, go up Shama's body. 'Get down, Get down', similarly, were addressed to the poison and not to the Brahmin. So, the poison had to get down his body and get away. This siddhi is referred to in *Srimad Bhagavata*, 15th Skanda, in the verse, *Yata sankalpa Samsiddhih*, and in the Upanishidic phrase,

'*Sathyavak Satyasankalpa*', the attributes of divinity and denote the fact that words or ideas expressed by a person in the divine state, in which Baba was, would have immediate effect and so the poison did no further injury to Shama's body. But while such a potent mantra was being uttered by Baba, which is a divine characteristic, there was also the human characteristic of humour combined with it. This was peculiar to Baba.

We shall mention another occasion when Baba conferred the remarkable power of production or materialisation upon Kusa Bhav, while having some fun at his expense. Kusa Bhav, as already mentioned in a previous chapter, had developed his mantric side with the help of a low species of mantras, which resulted in the production of articles belonging to various persons and their transfer to his hands. Baba, when Kusa Bhav came to his feet, directed him to refrain from such sinful practices and the poor man was regretting that the glorious powers which he had and the fame which he obtained thereby, were all lost. One day when he approached Baba, Baba asked him, 'what did you eat to-day?' Kusa Bhav said, 'Nothing, because it is Ekadasi to-day'. Baba pretended not to know what Ekadasi was, and asked 'What does Ekadasi mean?'

Kusa Bhav said, 'It is a day for Upavasa'.

Baba (again pretending not to know): What is Upavasa?

Kusa bhav (seriously in Hindustani): *Rojas*. Upavasa is like *Rojas*.

Baba : What is *Rojas*?

Kusa Bhav : We fast, that is we do not eat anything except *Kanda Moola*. By '*Kanda Moola*', Kusa bhav meant '*Ratalae*', that is, sweet potatoes, etc.

Baba here played a joke. '*Kanda*' if slightly lengthened in the first vowel, will become '*Kaanda*', which means, onion. Baba then said, "Oh! it is *kaanda* you are eating'. Baba, taking up a piece of onion (*kaanda*), gave it to Kusa Bhav, saying, 'Eat it', Orthodox people have strong objection to eating onions, especially on an Ekadasi day. Kusa Bhav, finding that Baba was forcing on him unorthodox food, said, 'Baba, if you eat it, I will'. Baba had no orthodoxy and no heterodoxy so, he ate some. Kusa bhav also therefore ate some. By this time visitors were arriving. Baba wanted to have some fun, and said 'Look at this

Bamnia (a corrupt and contemptuous expression for Brahmin); he eats onion on an Ekadasi day'. Kusa Bhav explained, 'Baba himself ate it and I did'. But Baba said, 'No I ate *'Kanda'*, that is sweet potatoes, *Ratalai'*. Then Baba vomited *Ratalai*. Here was the wonder. What had been eaten by Baba was onion, and what was vomited was *Ratalai*. This again is *'Yata sankalpa samsiddhi'*, a very high yogic power which is part of Baba's divine equipment of powers. Kusa Bhav was surprised to see Baba's vomiting *Ratalai*, and he fell upon it and ate the vomit. Baba beat him, saying, 'Why, do you eat the vomit?' But Kusa Bhav did not mind it. Baba's heart then melted. And he was anxious to give a blessing that would please Kusa Bhav. What Kusa Bhav wanted was power to produce materials. So, Baba said, 'I hereby give you my blessing. I give you this power. Think of me and hold forth your palm. And in your palm you will have my prasada, that is, warm udhi from the dhuni. Give it and *it will help all the people who receive it being blessings from me*'. It was a very valuable power, which did not require repetition of any mantra, but merely that he should think of Baba and hold forth his palm. But while conferring such a grand benefit on Kusa Bhav and upon others dealing with him, Baba employed his practical joke and played a pun upon the word *'Kanda'* and next vomited one thing when he had eaten another all for the purpose of the practical joke. The end of all the humour and the joke was the conferment on Kusa Bhav of a very valuable power, which he exercised right up to the end of his life. Here again, we see the human and the divine features of Baba, especially the kindness which gave power to a devotee, so closely intermixed with pun and playing tricks. At meal time, it appears he would often be joking with people and taking them eat more and eat heartily. For instance, he might say to one, 'Are you afraid you will be impoverishing Baba's Sansthan? Eat heartily'.

Again, on one occasion, when Hemad Pant (Anna Dabolkar) came to him, there was in the fold of his coat some channa, that is, fried grain, and it fell from his coat; and people were joking at him. That was a day of the fair at Shirdi, and Dabolkar had perhaps been to the fair. Baba, wanting to have a joke at him, said. "Oh! This channa shows that he is in the habit of eating things all by himself

without sharing it with others". Dabolkar was much upset and he protested that he had no such habit. But how the channa got into his dress, he could not explain. Then, Baba made further use of the occasion, and told him, 'When you eat, do you give things to me? Am I not always by your side?' thus impressing on him a very valuable lesson that Baba was present everywhere, and that they should first offer their food to him as their Gurudeva, before taking their food. This is a sacred lesson, and this teaching is divine. But it came out of Baba's humour, and fun poked at Anna Saheb Dabolkar.

On another occasion, Baba wished to impress Dixit and Rege with his wonderful powers and teach them also some humility. Rege had prepared lime syrup, and piqued himself on his cleverness in making such a fine syrup, for he had tasted it and found it excellent. So, he carried it jubilantly to Baba. H.S. Dixit was there, and Baba, when the drink was brought to him, tasted a bit of it, put on a wry face, and told Kaka Dixit, 'Arre Kaka, see how acid this squash is that is given to me.' He passed it on to Rege himself. Rege tasted it, and found it was acid. He was mortified. What, to present to his Guru such a severely acid drink! Immediately Baba smiled, and said, 'I am only *joking*. Now taste each of you. You will find it sweet'. Then Dixit and Rege both tasted the very same liquid, and they found it sweet. We cannot say whether Baba's purpose was merely to play a practical joke or teach his devotees humility. Humour, we find was only Baba's kindly way of dealing with erring human beings.

On another occasion, Baba had to impress a stranger, Kaka Mahajani's master. That man would not easily believe in saints, but was prevailed upon by Mahajani to go with him to see Baba, whose powers were reported to be wonderful, and so he was anxious to see some *chamatkars*. On the way they had purchased at a bazaar *Monakka*, i.e. dried grapes with seeds. When that packet was taken and presented to Baba, Baba took some and gave a portion of it to Kaka Mahajani and his master to taste. The boss (Thakersay Sait) put the grapes into his mouth and ate. Being in a Mosque, he could not spit the seeds. So he was obliged to spit them into his handkerchief and put that in his pocket. He was wondering how Sai Baba, who was said to be an all-knowing person, could fail to

understand this difficulty. Baba knew at once everything that passed in his mind, and immediately offered him some more of the grapes. The very grapes he had brought, namely, the grapes with seeds, were given to him, and Baba said, 'Eat'. So, he had to obey. He was annoyed at having to dirty his handkerchief. But lo! And behold! When these grapes were put into his mouth, they had become seedless grapes. He had himself purchased grapes with seeds, and here were they turned into seedless ones. Here was a *chamatkar* and he was satisfied as he wanted *chamatkars* from Baba. But Baba enjoyed this spectacle of mental puzzles with amusement and also gave him an opportunity to study His powers which is again '*Yata sankalpa samsiddhih*', a power that comes to bhaktas who concentrate their minds on the Lord and whose every wish is therefore immediately effective.

Another case of practical joke is this. This carried with it a moral lesson also showing us the combination of the human and divine elements in Baba. M.B. Rege was a devotee greatly attached to Baba. Once when he sat by Baba's side, somebody brought a bunch of red plantains to be offered to Baba. Young Rege was very fond of these fruits. He thought that Baba would, of course, distribute these plantains amongst all, and he would have an opportunity of having his share of fine red plantains to eat. Baba read his mind at once. Baba then took up the plantains, and after distributing the fruits to all, omitting Rege, he pulled off one fruit, and, having given the pulp to somebody else, threw the red skin alone on Rege saying, '*Khav, Khav*'- eat. It was the red exterior that had attracted young Rege, and the kind but jovial Baba was showing him what the red exterior was. It was no doubt unpalatable, but still Rege's bhakti rose equal to the occasion and he swallowed the skin as though he was a bull. Baba took up a second fruit and a third and went on throwing them to Rege being in a mood for jokes. But at last, he turned to Rege and said, 'Ha! have I given you no fruit?' Then, as he really loved Rege, reluming Rege's powerful love, he peeled off another fruit and asked Rege to bite it off, and then he himself bit off another portion, and thus between them, they finished the plantain. This enjoying one plantain together was a sign of great love, and the joke also had the effect of

impressing on the young devotee the important lesson that externals, which attracted, were really not worth having, the attractive redness of the skin of the red plantain would not give him joy when eaten by itself. Instances of Baba's humour and practical jokes are many.

Another instance of humor is as follows. There was a Ramadasi, who was waiting upon Baba and reading his Vishnu Sahasranama and other holy books at the Mosque. He had the whole thing by heart. And he kept up the parayanam of Vishnu Sahasranama at the Mosque. One day Baba wished to have some fun and teach him a lesson. Baba said he had some stomach trouble, and told the Ramadasi to go to the bazaar to fetch some senna leaves for him. When the Ramadasi left the premises, Baba pulled out his Vishnu Sahasranama and gave it to Shama telling him to keep it and read it. Shama protested that the man would get angry. Baba said, 'Never mind, keep it'. But soon the Ramadasi returned. Then Anna Chinchinikar, wanting to play the role of Narada, told the Ramadasi that his Vishnu Sahasranama had been taken by Baba and given to Shama. Then the Ramadasi got fiery, flared up, and vituperated against Shama for having used Baba to rob him of his sacred book. Baba then said to the Ramadasi, 'Shama is only our child. There is no reason to get angry with him'. Baba said that as far as the Ramadasi was concerned, no book was necessary, because he had the whole thing by heart, and if he was going to get angry for the loss of a book, he was not a '*Ramadasi*' but a '*Kamadasi*'. He was a slave to the sense of property attachment to earthly goods which servants of Rama ought to avoid. So, Baba gave some very sound moral lessons to the Ramadasi. Then Shama too mollified the Ramadasi saying that he would get fresh books - new books - and give them to the Ramadasi. The man was partly mollified. But Baba's practical joke and pun were impressed on the memory of everyone present showing how even for the possession of a sacred book one should not lose one's temper. One should retain equanimity under all circumstances, especially a Ramadasi, that is, a follower of God. This is a spiritual instruction of great value not merely to the Ramadasi but to all. Baba gave that instruction accompanied

with his practical joke so as to impress it on the mind of every one present and every one that reads it.

Baba sometimes used expressions which were apparently foul, abused and cursed against persons present but which were really curses against the evil influences operating on him. This process is a joke though not understood at the time as joke. The famous Gadge Bua, who built his famous and splendid chatrams at Pandharpur and Nasik, was trying to build the Nasik Dharmasala. Funds came up only sufficient for the construction of the ground floor. And then no more funds were forthcoming. His attempt appeared to have some misfortune or set back, spiritual evidently, and so Gadge Bua, who had great reverence for Sai Baba, went to him in order to appeal to him to get over the spiritual hindrances. When he went to Baba and started to tell about the matter, Baba used foul and obscene curses, and at once Gadge Bua began to laugh and Baba also laughed with him. There ended the matter. It looked as though Baba was cursing and abusing and tried to drive away Gadge Bua. But really he was cursing and swearing down the hindrance that prevented Gadge Bua from going on with the construction of his chatram. After this mystic process of abuse, Gadge Bua's obstacles were removed, and funds flowed freely and he completed his Nasik chatram. He has put up Sai Baba's picture in his Dharmasalas.

One other way in which Baba combined humour with a serious religious or spiritual performance was in connection with B. V. Dev. B.V. Dev found that on account of some poorva samskara, he could never complete any parayana or pothi of Jnaneswari. Each time he tried, the effort broke down. So, as Jnaneswari is considered to be the most important of books for pothi or parayana, he went to Baba and Baba demanded considerable dakshinas of Rs. 25 and more. Then Baba sent Dev back. Dev after returning from Baba, met Balakram Manker, and wished to learn from him more about Baba's wonderful powers and asked him for his experience. Balakram Manker promised to mention them the next day, and when next day he was about to start his narration, Baba suddenly sent for Dev, and flared up in anger. He asked Dev, 'What! You are an old man, and in spite of your grey hairs, you indulge in stealing rags! I will kill you with a hatchet'. Dev

was dumbfounded. The effect of being shocked was probably part of the mystic process, which Baba was conducting for his benefit, but Dev understood nothing. Then Baba asked him to go and fetch dakshina. Again Dev produced Rs. 25 and next Rs. 25. Baba asked him, 'What are you reading?' Dev replied, 'Nothing'. Baba asked him, 'Why do you not read pothi such as Jnaneswari?' Baba told him then to go on with that pothi, and said, 'when I am trying to present you with a full lace shawl, you are trying to steal a rag from me'. Dev went on with his Jnaneswari parayana at Shirdi and finished it. That was the first time when he could finish the pothi, and without any hindrance. It was a miracle: His former samskaras were obstructing him till then. Baba gave him a very valuable experience, and it was highly useful to him. A parayana of Jnaneswari, which is a commentary upon Bhagavad Gita, has a high spiritual value, and yet this imparting of the great spiritual benefit was accompanied by a humorous threat that Baba would kill him with a hatchet and Baba's charge against him that he was stealing rags (koupinas). Then Dev understood the point. The rag that he was said to be stealing was the second-hand and third-hand report from Manker of experiences about Baba, whereas the full lace shawl that Baba wanted to give was the direct experience by Dev himself of Baba's overcoming his poorva samskaras that prevented pothi being completed by him. Here again the humour and the pretended anger and the conferment of a great spiritual boon were so nicely intertwined as to be inseparable. It was greatly impressive and never to be forgotten.

Baba's saying 'I am not at Shirdi', when he was actually staying with them at the Mosque, was another instance of humour combined with great spiritual truth. By his statement that he was not at Shirdi, he wished to convey that he was not the physical body seen at Shirdi, but the real personality, which is a divine Force present everywhere especially in the hearts of all people. Baba meanwhile enjoyed the puzzled looks of people who thought that he was talking untruth by denying his presence at Shirdi. This was specially the case with a local lady, who could not understand what Baba meant by his words to Mrs. R. A. Tarkhad. Baba said to the latter, 'Mother, I am going thrice a day to your house in Bandra. Is it

not?' and that lady said, 'yes'. The local lady said, "We are seeing Baba everyday here, and how would he go thrice a day to Bandra, which is 100 miles away?" But Baba said, 'I go to that house'. He then gave a description of the route, there being a railway line, a wall and next the house, etc. The local lady did not understand that Baba was referring to his travelling in his *linga sarira* 10 his devotees' places and accepting the naivedyas, etc., offered there.

Another practical joke played by Baba for effecting good was the following. Kaka Mahajani was suffering from diarrhoea. He had frequent motions and so he had to carry with him a vessel (lota) of water. Along with the lota of water, he had come to the Mosque. Baba knew very well his condition, and when Kaka was there, he suddenly got into a rage and uttered words and acted in such a furious way that all people took to their heels. In the rush and bustle some one seated at the mantap eating groundnuts left the groundnuts and fled for life. Kaka Mahajani thought that he must also go away. But Baba quietly came down to him and asked him to sit. Then they took up the groundnuts left by that stranger, and both of them consumed the groundnuts, and drank water. Now groundnut and water is hardly the best treatment for diarrhoea. In ordinary cases, it would accelerate diarrhoea and make the man miserable. But in this case, Baba said, 'Your anus be closed' and the discharge ceased. Kaka Mahajani was cured. Baba had used his apparent fury for the purpose of securing groundnuts for his devotee.

Another humorous incident has already been mentioned. When Mr. Sadasiva Tarkhad who was not employed came to Baba hoping to find employment with Baba's aid, Baba suddenly ordered him to go back to Poona in company with Taty Patil and others who were going to Ahmednagar to see a film. This looked very cruel and heartless, nay horrid, to send the man back without job and asking him to go and attend to amusement, when there was no provision for him to earn his bread. But he went with them to Ahmednagar and thence to Poona. At Poona he found that a local mill was needing a manager badly, as the labourers had given trouble and a capable manager was wanted. The mill authorities had been sending telegrams to find out where Sadasiva

Tarkhad was. Baba knowing of it, yet humorously omitting to inform him sent him back in time to get the mill managership.

One day a very old goat, just on the eve of death strayed into the Mosque Mantap. Baba asked Bade Baba to cut it with a knife. Bade Baba's heart revolted against this needless cruelty, and he left the Mosque. Baba asked Shama to fetch a knife from Ayi and kill it. Ayi sent the knife, but learning that it was for killing the dying goat, recalled the knife. Again Shama professing to go out for another knife decamped. Baba was enjoying the humour all the time. Then he sent for H.S. Dixit and asked him to fetch a knife and kill it. Dixit was the soul of obedience to Baba, and he was very intimately attached to Baba. So he took up a knife in his hand and asked Baba, 'Shall I kill it?' 'Yes' said Baba. Then he still hesitated. Baba said, "Why are you hesitating?" Then Dixit determined to kill it, for with him obedience to Baba was superior to sympathy for creatures. As Dixit was just lowering his knife over the head of the animal, Baba suddenly stopped him, and said, 'Do not kill the animal, I will myself kill it.' Then he took up the animal over his shoulders and walked a few paces. The creature then breathed its last. Baba knew full well what was going to happen, and was only enjoying the fun, and also testing the mental development of devotees. This test showed the perfection of Dixit's devotion.

There are many more instances of Baba's humour but it seems to be hardly necessary to labour the point. Baba like every other human being appreciated a humorous situation and he indulged in the humour not merely because it was natural but also because the human side must be presented to devotees along with his divine side so that they may be able to have the courage to grasp the Baba personality. Without the human, the divine part of Baba's personality could not be so well grasped and utilised by the devotees. One more excellent illustration of how the two combined in another saint may be the close of this chapter.

The late Sri C.N. Kuppuswami Iyer, Judge of the High Court of Madras, in trying to recall Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, for whom he had the highest reverence, said, 'I see now before my mind's eye the smiling face and the one

protruding single solitary tooth projecting from behind his lip and his uttering valuable and sacred lessons for people to learn'. Thus, it is the physical personality with the peculiarity of one protruding tooth that constituted the human element with which the divine element of presenting holy and lofty truths was intertwined in the judge's memory. That is an excellent illustration to show how we remember clearly what seems to be irrelevant human features. The irrelevant human feature comes in just a position with which the divine is drawn and made use of. This is very frequently the case, and that is why we are asked to study Avatars and deal with Bhagavatas, before realising the nature of Bhagvan. We get at Bhagvan through the Bhagavatas. We get at God through the Saint and not otherwise, *daivam manusha rupena* is an oftquoted saying. So the human is wanted, the human in the Bhagavata and the saint. That is why there are prayers in Srimad Bhagavata (Skanda 5, Chapter 11, verse 24) in which the devotee prays to God:

*Aham hare tavapadaikamoola dasanudaso bhavitasmi bhuyah  
Manasmareta asitpateh gunante grinita vak karma karotu kayah.*

This means, 'May I, O! Hari, be born again (after death) as a servant of those devotees who have solely taken refuge in Your (lotus) feet. Let my mind ponder over and my tongue celebrate the excellences of the Lord of my life, and let my body do your service'.

The highest Bhagavata who has lived in modern days and whose Ofame has reached us, is Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi, always absorbed in God with "*Allah Malik*" ever on his lips and in his heart, resigning all doership to God and ever intent on serving Him in all His forms of living beings, and ever desiring service, loving service, not salvation nor annihilation, nor total merger in Brahman.

*Na naka prishtam, Na cha parameshtyam, Na sarvabhowmam, Na rasadhipatyam, Na yogasiddhir apunarbhavam Va, Samanjasa Twa virahasya kankshe,* which means, 'I do not long for Heaven nor Brahmaloaka, nor rulership of this entire world nor of the Rasatala world, nor all the Yoga siddhis, nor escape from Rebirth, O God! if thereby I am to be without you'.

## CHAPTER X

### **Baba's Siddhis, Their Origin, and Their Use**

When Baba first came into Shirdi, he was a totally unrecognised fakir, and when after some stay he went out for three years and returned with Chan Bai Patel's marriage party, he was still practically in the same condition, though he was reported to have shown siddhi powers to Chan Bhai Pate! in the jungles near Aurangabad. When he came into Shirdi on that occasion, he had evidently in his mind that Shirdi should be his permanent abode, and wished to find some place to rest his head. The Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nest. But the son of Man hath not where to lay his head, (Math. 8-20) said Jesus, and the Gita says that the best beloved Bhakta is homeless (*Aniketana*). It was the same with Sai. There was no place that he could call his own. Everything was his and nothing was his. He had perfect vairagya and no attachment to any person or place, though, especially at Shirdi, there were numerous persons and places at that time that had relations with him by reason of rinanubandha association and the ties arising from such association.

The first place that he came to after parting with Chan Bhai Patel's marriage party was the shaded temple of Kandobha, a small mud structure surrounded by shady trees. It was an ideal spot sufficiently removed from the village with sufficient holy association to be selected by any hermit for his place of meditation. In fact, many decades after Baba came, when Upasani Maharaj came and wanted a spot for his solitary meditation and hermit life, he hit upon the identical spot and was allowed to stay there for a period of about three years, 1911-14. But when Sai Baba (a young fakir) expressed his appreciation of the site for the residence of a hermit like himself, Mahlsapathy, the person in charge, objected to Baba, whom he took to be a Muhammadan, residing there. Hence Baba had to seek some other place. Baba found the foot of the Margosa tree a suitable place to stay for some time, a place in immediate proximity to his former Guru's tomb. A tree foot being however a very uncomfortable place for human flesh and blood, especially in times of rain and wind, he had to choose the dilapidated Mosque. While he was staying under this tree or at the foot of other

trees or rambling in the woods, he did not exhibit any powers but was concentrating all attention on his Guru-God. It was a considerable time before he first exhibited his siddhi power by converting water into oil. He was provoked into it by the gracelessness of the local vanis (i.e. Oil-mongers) who thought him to be a crazy fakir, and wanted to have some fun at his expense. When Baba wanted the oil badly for lighting up the lamps at the Mosque, which would be totally dark without the lamps, they told him that they had no oil, though it was a lie. Then he went up to the Mosque and (after completely clearing off even the last drops of oil sticking to the tin or timbrel, as he called it, by putting water into it and drinking off the solution of the mixture of oil and water) filled his lamps with water, inserted wicks into them, and lighted up the wicks. To the great surprise of the villagers, the wicks not only started burning but kept on burning all night, as though they were fed by supply of very good oil. Now this is what is called a miracle, *chamatkar*, or *siddhi*.

What took place was the conversion of water into oil. Somehow oil came into the lamp in a sufficient quantity to burn all night. Now this is not explicable to ordinary men with their notions of chemistry and physics. Water is not converted into oil except through castor plants and other plants which suck up the water, mix them with their other ingredients, and produce oil in the seeds of the fruits that they give. Without any such process, Baba was able to fill his lamps with oil. What is this *siddhi* called? Patanjali's Yoga Sutras and Srimad Bhagavata, 11th Skanda, 15th Chapter, amongst other books, give a list of *siddhis* attained by yoga processes, and what Baba did would be called '*Yatha Sankalpa Samsiddhih*' and '*Apratihata Ajna*,' that is producing whatever one wants by mere will power or supreme command. There are so many complicated processes mentioned in the Yoga Sutras. Sutras 16 to 50 of Chapter 3 of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras show what powers are obtained in what way.

In Chapter 15 of Srimad Bhagavata, 11th Skanda, verses 5 to the end of the Chapter, a similar description is given. Mantra and Tantra books show how magicians produce articles. The question naturally would be raised by the learned as to what process Baba adopted, and how he effected his object of

replacing water by oil for his lamps: The one short answer we might give to all such questions would be that Baba was not a Mantric who got his powers for specific purposes by adopting specific processes or specific mantras so far as we know. He seems to have been concentrating his desireless attention on God always thinking of Allah and as he put it, constantly saying. *Allah Malik*, or 'Hari, Hari, Hari' till Hari at last appeared before him. The power he got to produce what he wanted may be easily classified (if classification is necessary) under the 32nd stanza of the 15th Chapter of Srimad Bhagavata, 11th Skanda. That stanza says:-

*jitendriyasya dantasya jitaswasa atmano muneh  
maddharanam dharayatah ka sa siddhis sudurlabhah*

This means, 'What power is beyond the reach of the sage who has controlled his mind, senses, nerve currents and disposition, and concentrates on Me (Krishna or God)? Whether it is the Krishna form or Guru form or any other form, God is one and the same. The only requisite is that the concentration should be powerful and prolonged so as to bring on the properties of the contemplated form on the contemplating soul.

So, '*Yatha sankalpa samsiddhih*', that is, 'realising whatever one wants', and '*tasya cha ajnayatha mama*', namely, 'Getting one's command obeyed everywhere like God's command', are two portions of the siddhi chapter in Srimad Bhagavata sufficient to explain all The siddhis, chamatkars, and the powers etc., exhibited by Baba throughout his life. No doubt in some cases, when he was putting it in the form of prayer to God, and his will and God's will became one and the same. In such cases, Baba said, 'I am praying to Allah, He will carry out the prayer'. If this is kept in mind, it would be easy to understand the innumerable chamatkars which are found in the life of Baba as reported by devotees and as embodied in books like the Gospel of Sai Baba, etc.

One thing is clear, that is, during the early days of his stay at Shirdi he was keen on concentrating his attention on his Guru-God or Allah, and did not wish to waste his efforts by using the siddhis.

He realised what he himself said to some of his devotees (like R.A. Tarkhad) that utilising siddhis for obtaining earthly objects produced distraction,

that is, drew one's mind away from God. This is the advice given in verse 33 of the above Chapter 15 in Srimad Bhagavata and in Mantra 35 of Chapter 3 of Patanjali's Yoga sutras. Therefore, Baba did not waste his time in trying to work miracles or *chamatkars* in his early years. After lighting the lamps in the Mosque by converting water into oil, he did not repeat his *chamatkars*. This display of power was wrung out of him on that occasion by the levity of the "Vanis". He reserved all power within himself and held his mind on to God not only from his natural love of concentration on God but also in obedience to the well known dictum of Kabir "*Jinne Paya Vnne chupaya*", that is, 'He who has achieved something keeps it a secret'. There was nothing to be gained by him by a display of powers, for his desires were all controlled, and his barest necessities were met by his going about with his begging bowl in the streets, and, from there calling out for *roti* or *dhall*, and returning to the *Masjid* which gave him shelter. There was nothing else that he wanted. Food and shelter were provided. The tattered clothes that he wore quite sufficed especially with the help of the *dhuni* or the fire which he kept up in the Mosque.

Conquest of *Indriyas* is said to be a *siddhi*, but would be better termed a perfection of the soul from within, which Baba had achieved by the grace of his Guru and by the long training he had under his foster father or first Guru, the *fakir* and under his final Guru *Venkusa*. He was desireless and unaffected by the jeers or the praise of people about him, To such a person, there was no necessity to utilise *siddhi* powers, to produce articles as *Kusa Bhav* did. *Kusa Bhav* wanted fame and emoluments, which his power of production or materialization enabled him to get. But Baba wanted nothing. Baba's *siddhi* powers, however, were not an encumbrance. They were part of his equipment. His Guru had divine powers in him, and by *Saktinipata*, at the time of parting from him, the Guru had passed them over to Baba either potentially or in full force or perhaps partly potentially and partly in full force. He could invoke the Guru's own power to raise the dead as he did about the time when he parted from his Guru. Baba said to *Kaka Dexit*, 'I can revive the dead boy and bring back his soul from the body into which it has entered, into the corpse of the cobra-bitten boy here, but that would be interfering

with the karma of that soul' and showed Dixit the impropriety of exercising such siddhis merely to gratify the sympathy of Dixit with the cries of the agonised mother of the cobra-bitten boy.

Baba Said, "Death is inevitable and when it takes place at the appointed time, the proper course for a jnani or yogi is to encourage people to face the sorrow and not to exercise his powers to bring back the departed soul from the new body into which it might have entered. On that occasion, he showed his *Pratibha*, which single term would cover the numerous instances in which Baba had shown his knowledge of things which took place far and near and of the hearts of all people including creatures like lizards. This *Pratibha* is referred to in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, verse 34, which runs thus, '*Pratibhadva sarvam*'. This means all siddhis and knowledge are attained by the development of *Pratibha*, namely, this spontaneous enlightenment or illumination that blazes out in oneself, by and as a result of perfect satwa or purity, that is, perfect concentration on God. These powers of Baba's *Pratibha* and his perfect concentration on God resulted in "*apratihata ajna*", "*yatha sankalpa samsiddhih*", "*Bhuta jaya*", "*akasa gamana*", "*manojava*", etc., and formed a full panoply and perfect equipment for his work as Samartha Sadguru for **those** whom he wished to lead on their path to God.

A Samartha Sadguru must have all powers, though he may or may not exercise them. The powers are intended to be exercised to help the sishya to grasp the real nature of his Guru and his real greatness, and to overcome numerous obstacles from time to time that may be impeding his progress. The Guru also might utilise them for the benefit of the very large class of persons approaching him not as sishyas prepared to go through the full course of a spiritual discipline, but to have some benefit at his hands, mostly temporal, and it may be partly spiritual.

Taking for instance the case of G. S. Khaparde, whose object was mainly to escape from the jaws of the foreign Government and be free from their molestation in his legal, social and political life. Baba exercised his vast powers, especially of thought control, and crushed out from Government Official minds all

ideas of prosecuting Khaparde for the speeches he made in his political activities inspired by patriotism. Baba utilised similar powers for benefiting Damia (Damodar S. Rasane) in whose case some invisible and unperceived factors were preventing his having progeny though he lived with two wives and as also for granting longevity to Narke's children born after he gave Narke the blessing 'Allah will bless' (after he learnt that all the children born to him until then died prematurely). There are mantras in Mantra Sastra for practically each one of the above objects; and specific mantras, yantras, tantras, homas, etc., are prescribed for achieving the very same objects.

For example, *Putra kameshti* would suit the object which Damodar S. Rasane had in his mind, and *Simsumara Yantra* puja was what Narke badly needed (for longevity of children). *Maha Karya Siddhi* Homa in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* speaks of controlling all thoughts of persons in the desired direction, and these would be prescribed by orthodox Sastris for G.S. Khaparde. Baba however did not adopt any of these prescribed processes, but purely by his own will power granted relief in all the above cases.

Similarly Baba mentioned frequently facts about the past, immediate or remote, the present and the future, immediate or remote of every one going to him. For example, Baba said that eight children would be born to Damia in 15 years, and also spoke of the appointment that Narke would get three or four years later. Such feats also are referred to in the above mentioned books and other books on Mantra Sastra, and also in books on Jyotisha Sastra. Baba himself said, 'Your astrologers dive into the future and say some things of which a half or so come true'. Baba added, 'I know the future, and what I say comes true'.

As for '*yatha sankalpa samsiddhihi*' Baba said, 'I say here, things happen there (in accordance with what I say)'. Baba did not proceed in accordance with Yoga Sutras or other texts to achieve these objects. By his contemplation of the Supreme, the power of the Supreme were inherent in him. This is what Srimad Bhagavata says:

*Maddaranam dharayatah ka sa siddhih sudurlabah?*

This means, 'When one gets laya in God, all powers, all knowledge, all wisdom, all perfection, that are termed divine, shine forth from such a person'. Baba was perfect in his concentration on God. Therefore in the above quoted instances as in the other innumerable instances to be found in the Gospel of Sai Baba (i.e. BCS) or other books on Baba, the powers exercised by Baba were the result of his laya in God, that is, they were *really divine powers*.

In many, if not all, cases, the object of Baba was that a devotee should not merely get relief but also a full belief in him (Baba) that he was the Guru-God for the devotee so that the devotee might attach himself firmly to Sai Baba, and develop his life thereafter with his help. This is the great object with which siddhis were utilised by Baba. Temporal help was given by means of these *chamatkars*, but there was always a string attached to the temporal help. The man who got a temporal benefit had at the same time a push in the spiritual direction. When Baba was going to give Damia four fruits he started by saying, 'Damia, people are crying, "Give, give". Here are the fruits; eat and die'. Damia was very much puzzled. He came in order to get issue, but here death was mentioned. Then Baba smiled and told him that the fruits were not for him but for his second wife to eat. And that she would bear eight children for him. Now eight children are a very large portion of *samsara*. *Samsara* makes a man thoroughly absorbed in the world and thus he gets in *Pramada*, that is, forgetting God completely and thinking only of the world and worldly objects as the be-all and end-all of existence. Thus, this *Samsara pramada* is death said Sanatkumara in Sanatsujatiya and Baba gave him an inkling of that danger of *pramada* before pushing him into *samsara*,

Similarly when Baba was asked to give help on other occasions, he gave the help and with it faith in him. For instance, in the case of Narke, Dhumal, and Buty, who all felt that Baba was a person armed with divine powers and was, therefore, *Acharya devo bhava*, the proper person to be treated by them as a Guru, as Upanishads say 'Treat Guru as GOD'. Dhumal got perfect confidence that he was looked after by Baba, when Baba assured him 'Bhav, the whole of last night I had no sleep; I was thinking and thinking of you'. Dhumal noticed how

to prevent his thoughts from running away with him into harmful and sinful directions. Baba was spending his entire night in controlling those thoughts. He could not but get the impression that Baba was omnipotent and omniscient and that Baba was his Guardian Angel so that ever afterwards he could simply place himself in Baba's guardianship under all circumstances and be safe. Such a use of his omniscience was shown also in the protection he extended to Dhumal during times of plague, when Dhumal continued to live in plague-rat-ridden bungalows under Baba's care getting no harm thereby. Cases like this not only increased Dhumal's own confidence in Baba, but helped other people, who noticed Dhumal's immunity from plague, to know about the divine nature of Baba and his fitness to be a Guru to all persons who could summon up courage to surrender to Him and make themselves his disciples or devotees. This is the great use that Baba made of his siddhis from time to time that while granting Dhumal benefits he attached to them spiritual adjuncts. There were cases of great complexity coming before Baba in his dealings with hundreds of persons, if not thousands, in the course of the 40 or 50 years that he spent in Shirdi before he left his fleshy body.

The most striking difference between Baba's siddhis and use of them and others, (i. e, magicians' and *mantravadis'*) siddhis and their use may be briefly summarised thus:

(1) Baba's powers were part of his high nature and resulted from his concentration with love and intensity on his Guru-God. The powers of magicians are expressly sought and acquired by them by trance, japa or puja of petty deities conducted only for the purpose of acquiring the siddhis.

(2) The latter class of persons are not desireless yogis but persons desiring to acquire power for the love of power and all the worldly name, fame, wealth and control, etc., that siddhis produce.

(3) The siddhis they acquire are limited in extent and require the repetition of Japa, trance, etc., as they will soon end; and exercise of siddhis diminishes the supply of power with the indulgence in worldly desires while resorting to Siddhis buries them deeper in samsara.

(4) There might be danger in contacting magicians to the persons resorting to them while there is none in resorting to Samartha Sadgurus like Sai Baba who are intent on the welfare (temporal and spiritual) of those approaching them.

(5) Questions of payment arise with magicians, mantravadis but not with Samartha Sadgurus.

(6) The powers of magicians, mantravadis etc., are strictly limited and cannot have the wide operation of Samartha Sadguru Sai's powers. So, not infrequently the mantravadi's and magician's efforts and statements especially as to the future fail in a considerable proportion of cases. With Sai there is no failure of power to do or to see and speak out the future, etc.

(7) Where powers are acquired and used with the help of spirits, the magician's life and welfare are at the mercy of the spirits and so they use iron bangles, talismans etc.. and some of them are killed or maimed by the spirits. Sai Baba ran no such risk.

The problems get extremely complicated by the egotism and other evil tendencies of various persons. Baba himself remarked from time to time that the times were getting bad, that people were prone to look on the evil side of things and develop their evil side, that he had been praying to God for the removal of these evil things and for betterment, and that God had not granted his prayer but that he had not given up his prayer and that he was determined to push on and see that the evil was removed. This referred to persons who were in very close contact with him. Some of them had dedicated their entire lives to him and still retained vices or evil ways.

Some of them were too egotistic to yield to him unless he resorted to extreme measures which, of course, he was not prepared to resort to. Some of them could never make up their minds to fully surrender. Luckily a few surrendered and obtained perfect calm like H.S. Dixit, Bala Saheb Bhate and Balakram Manker. But the number of these people was small. The unregenerate and the obdurate were the many. They were of both sexes. Some of them were rendering very useful service to him and still were sticking on to evil ways. It was his self inflicted duty or prerogative to correct them and put them in the right way.

People are always attracted by things uncommon and many persons jump to conclusions that an unusual thing is produced by superhuman power, and if the power, which is superhuman, is divine, that is, that of a saint, they call it a miracle (for example Jesus's miracles). If not that of a saint, it might be the working of unseen spirit, elves, ghosts, spirits, pitrus, etc. Mohamad Bay employed his brother's deceased spirit to know the minds of others (his visitors) and used unseen spirits to scribble on paper (when pencil was placed on paper at their disposal) to write out those thoughts. He was considered a marvellous man and piled money (See Paul Brunton's book, 'Search in Secret India'). For one Mohamad Bay that Paul Brunton came across, we have hundreds of similar persons whose motive is the same, viz, fame and money, and who employed mantra, elves, and trance, power, etc., to read thoughts and hazard answers to mental questions of their visitors about the future and the readings of the past of the mass of persons (both men and women) are generally found correct and their predictions about the future are found almost invariably worthless though occasionally they hit the mark by chance.

Some of these persons combine palmistry, clairvoyance, necromancy, etc., with their own cleverness and make a name, acquire fame and wealth. And several of them are employing written books or palm leaves purporting to have been written long ages back and containing accounts of their visitors, past experiences, with sometimes remarkable accuracy. As a rule these leaves called *Nodi grantham* can be read only by their owners and not by others, and some of them are comically inclusive of the very time of consultation of the visitor and other present day detail which may be near effect of thought reading or plain knowledge of the so-called thought reader. Those which are based on astrological calculations do come out correct in a percentage of cases. But mostly they are remarkable failures as to the future, for their writers, or at least their exponents, though mentioning the exact moment of consultation and other details attendant on it, are unable to understand the future. Stories are told as to how great Sages have failed to understand the future, e.g.

*Yada vyasah cha dasah cha yamena mrutyna saha*

*Kalosya gruham aayanthi tada daso marishyati*

'Dasa, the pupil, asked Vyasa, his Guru, when dasa would meet with his death; (that being a future event). Vyasa could not say, and the two went to Yama and enquired of him, who also could not fix the time without asking Mrithyu, who also could not fix the time of death without asking Kala. Hence, all the four went to Kala to ask about the time of Dasa's death and at that time Dasa died. The above stanza was found written in Kala's book saying that Dasa would die when he, with Vyasa, Yama and Mrithyu, visited the house of Kala.'

This is but a story and is not part of any Sastra or result of yogic experience. The time of death is stated to be found by a person himself in Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Part III, verse 23 - *sopakramam nirupakramamcha karma tat samyamaadaparanta jnanam arishtebhyava*.

Karma is of two kinds, namely (1) fructifying immediately (2) fructifying later. By making *samyama* on these or by the signs called *arishta*, *portents*, the Yogis know the exact time of separation from their bodies.

This may correctly describe the psychological process in the mind of the Siddha, but the fact is well known that in a good number of people, the processes are quickly conducted to amount to an intuition and some holy persons or even apparently ordinary persons derive an impression that the death of a person whose face they see is very near. In the case of a blind man who went to Sai Baba for restoration of his eye sight, and who was given no encouragement by Baba for getting his eye sight, he went to Upasani Maharaj at Khandoba temple, who, when he saw him, derived the impression that death was not far off and in fact, within a month the man died.

Other instances of such intuition about others' death and about one's own death are fairly well known, though they are of course scarce. This siddhi of knowing the time of death is not after all so important as it looks. It is chiefly valuable to enable a person to spend his last moments in the thought of God. But to a very large number of persons the time when death approaches is fairly easily understood though not exactly fixed by noting the condition of the body with or without medical advice, and above all to ensure that the last thought should be

about God is done by adopting Sri Krishna's advice in Bhagavad Gita, Chapter VIII.

*tasmat sarveshu kaleshu mam anusmara yudhyacha  
mayi arpitha manobuddhih maamevaishyasi asamscayam*

This means, 'Therefore, at all times, remember Me and then do your duty of fighting; when you have surrendered your mind and reasoning power unto Me, you will surely come to Me'. There is a Tamil song, which means, "*I have told now itself what I have to say then (at the time of death)*". This is based upon the stanza in Mukunda Mala, in which the following lines occur:

*krishna twadeeya pada pankaja pancharaantah  
adyaiva me visatu maanasa raja hamsah  
prana prayaana samaye kapavatapithaih  
kantavarodhana vidhou smaranam kutaste*

This means, 'O, Krishna, into the lotus of Thy feet may the Swan (Rajahamsa) of my mind enter now alone. For at the time of death when the three humours (phlegm, wind, and bile) are holding the throat and oppressing the Soul, how is one to think of You?' The idea of these lines that we must immediately surrender to Lord Krishna, is right. Though there is no guarantee at the last moment, one can think of Krishna as advised in Bhagavad Gita, Chapter VIII.

Still there are a number of cases in which persons have died with clear consciousness upto the last, and have kept in mind their Ishta Devata or Guru Devata at that time. H.S. Dixit is a notable instance of this sort. There are several other cases also which might be known to the readers and might encourage hope in the reader that he might adopt the way of Sai Baba and his Guru, Noolkar, Vijayananda and others of spending their entire days before death amidst holy and inspiring studies, sights, and sounds, and thus pass on to God. Above all, firm Sai devotees with *drida bhakti* in him are assured by Baba in his Charters & Sayings that at the time of their death, Baba (B.C.&S, 95 and 96) would draw his devotees to himself even though they might die 1,000 miles away from Shirdi. Baba added, 'I will not allow my devotee to be lost. I will account to

God all those devotees drawn to Me.' Those with firm faith in Baba, as Guru God, will thus be drawn to God, who is identical with Baba. Baba said that the wife of Upasani Maharaj and the child of M.B. Rege thus came to him at the time of their deaths, and that they would be eternally with him. It would be ridiculous to ask which of the siddhis mentioned in Patanjali Yoga Sutras or Bhagavata, Ekadasa Skanda, Chapter 15, enabled Baba to do so. It is not a siddhi in the ordinary sense that gives this power. Sai Baba had by the grace of his Guru and by his prolonged and continuous Dhyana, Dharana Samadhi on God, Guru-God, attained laya in Him and all the powers flowing from God are found in such a devotee who had got poorna laya in God. In verses 31 and 32 of the XV Chapter of the 11th Skanda of Srimad Bhagavata, it is stated,.

*upasakasya mamevam yoga dharanaya muneh  
siddayah poorva kathita upatishtanthi asceshatah  
jitendriyasya daantasya jitasvasaan mano muneh  
maddharanam dharayatah kaa saa siddhih sudurlabha*

This means, To the sage who worships Me in the foregoing ways through yogic concentration, the above mentioned powers come in their full measure. No power is beyond the reach of the sage who has controlled his mind, senses, nerve currents and disposition, and concentrates on Me'.

These confirm Patanjali Yoga Sutras in Chapter III, especially those about *Pratibha* and *Sarva Bhava Athreshta Trithva* and *Sarve Jnathruthva*. Patanjali has said therein that by concentrating on the *Purusha* and developing *Suddhasatva* one attains *pratibha* (knowledge of everything), and one can do everything, i.e., achieve omnipotence and omniscience. Patanjali proceeds to point out that the seed of desire may still be there and if that is overcome, *Kaivalya* is attained. With Sai Baba, there was no seed of desire, and his reaching the *kaivalya* state is expressed by his words '*Maim Allahum*' and the other words found in Charters 66 to 68 prove that he had a Cosmic personality and not an individual personality. Being a person possessed of all siddhis and undertaking to look after devotees' temporal and spiritual welfare to lead them on to God, he had to exercise all these divine powers in him. When a theosophical

lady entered his Mosque with a doubt in her mind, whether his powers, *chamatkars*, etc., were instances of black magic, he spoke out (B. C. &S. 57), 'This (referring to himself) is a Brahmin, a white Brahmin; a pure (Subhra) Brahmin. This Brahmin will lead lakhs of people to *subhra marga* and take them to the goal right up to the end (the end, of course, is reaching God)'. It is hardly necessary to enquire into each particular case of his exercising this extraordinary power and see whether he adopted any of the processes mentioned in the Yoga Sutras or in the 15th chapter cited above or in the Mantra Sastras. Being merged in the Supreme especially by intense prayer and concentration, all power was with him. Yet the curious reader would like to analyse the various sorts of power he exercised on particular occasions, and see whether he achieved the so-called miracles. Whether we take his first achievement at Selu of reviving the dead man with no other remedy or mantras than the throwing of his Guru's *pada duti* on the corpse with a prayer for revival, or his taking water at his Shirdi Masjid and filling his lamps with that water for feeding the wicks with a prayer, we find his concentration on his Guru God is the only means.

The Mantra books are full of various mantras, tantras, and *oushadas* with a full detail of varied processes for *Mohanam*, *Vasikaranain*, *Akarshanam*, *Vidveshanam*, *Maaranam*, *Uchatanam*, etc., and these have absolutely no application to what Baba did. When Upasani Maharaj was trying to run away from him and Shirdi fully determined not to return in 8 days as promised, in June 1911, Baba fully gripped his mind and the minds of all those that he (U) came across and made him return within the 8th day without understanding or remembering his determination to return back home to Satana to be with his wife and mother. The force employed by Baba was mere will power i.e., *yata sankalpa samsiddhih* and did not require the usual tantric devices employed of drawing a line of water, addressing Indra, etc., to stop the passage of the runaway. As mentioned in the last stanza, for one resting in God with perfect *laya ka sa siddhih sudurlabhah*, what is the accomplishment or achievement that is unattainable? Baba knew everything that took place everywhere, every moment in connection with his devotees and could boldly give assurances even about the

future (which is stated in the stanzas quoted previously as being impossible for any except Kala).

Baba said about Nana Chandorkar when he was threatened with imminent death, 'Nana is about to die, but will I let him die?' The tonga in which Nana and Lele Sastri were seated was upset, and Baba, knowing the grave danger they were in, exercised his power of saving them "with four, four hands stretched out (unseen) to support them" and Nana was thus really saved from death. When Nandram Marvadi of Shirdi, from whose house also Baba begged for bread, caught the infection of plague, which was rife and rampant at Shirdi, and when he wanted to run away, Baba told him that he would not die and Baba would not allow him to die at any rate, until Baba's own body perished. This Nandram Marvadi was saved from death and continued to live for several decades. When an astrologar told Buty that there was a '*Ganda*<sup>1</sup> or danger of death to him, on a particular day, Baba Said, 'What! Does he say that Death will attack you? Strike. Let me see how you strike and kill". Later in the day a snake came near Buty, but did not bite him or kill him. The ability or power to say that death shall not come to a person is diastinctly divine.

Baba's powers, therefore, are seen to be divine powes and no curious readers or explorers can trace the origin of his powers to the employment of Mantra Sastra, Tantra or Yantra. Quite right were the devotees who identified Baba with God and treated him as their Guru Deva, or as Shama used to call him merely 'Deva". The distinction between the Nirguna Brahman and Saguna Brahman or Personal God and his agents armed with "vast and practically unlimited powers" is of no use to the Bhakta and proves to be a mere cause of confusion. In the presence of Baba devotees like Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiv Tarkhad and others felt nothing could hurt them so long as they were in his presence, not even death. And besides the protection (*Abhaya*) there was the feeling of Bliss radiating from Baba and permeating the devotees for hours and hours, such as that experienced by Narayanasram, G.S. Khaparde, the South African doctor and others. These fully justify the conclusion that Sai Baba, from whom such

illimitable Paramananda came, must himself be full of Pure Sat Chit Ananda, i.e., himself was (and is) God, whatever Narke and others might think.

Let us take the question of Swetcha Marana, which pertains to the human side of Baba, and consider what light might be thrown on the three occasions on which the problem arose. In 1886 Baba told Mahlsapathy that he was going to meet Allah, and might not return again, and if he did not return within three days, his body was to be interred near the sweet margosa tree, and if he returned, he might take up the body and live again. Then within a very short time of leaving the body, the body turned into a corpse. In the inquest he was declared dead, and the officers wanted the body to be buried. But the burial was prevented by Mahlsapathy and other devotees. Three days later, Baba came back to life and lived for 32 years thereafter. In 1916, it looked as though Baba would pass away, and Baba declared that his *simolanganam* (crossing the border) was the Dasara day. In 1918, he fully anticipated his departure on Dasara, 15th October. He had Hari Vijaya read at his Mosque and sent up money (Rs. 250/- or so) to a Muslim Saint Shamsuddin for the performance of Davalu, etc., and sent word to another Saint Bannemea that on the 9th day of the 9th month, God was taking away the light which he had himself lit (meaning, of course, the life of Sai Baba). Banne Mea shed tears on receipt of this information. Baba passed away calmly leaning on the body of Bagoji conscious to the last moment. This was just like the sage of Narayanapuram (*Surakka Paradesi*) at Narayanavanam near Puttur, Renigunta, and like Parikshit passing away in the Bhagavata. That one must always be in a detached state and must be thinking of God (which is the direction given in Bhagavad Gita) was exactly what was done by Baba. He was always thinking of God. Serving God is serving man and serving creation. He had evidently no need to determine the time of his death by noting the Arishta or omens or ripeness of his karma according to Patanjali Yoga Sutra No. 23, for all knowledge to him was an open book. His undertaking on behalf of his devotees to give them happy and blessed deaths, e.g., his promise to H. S. Dixit to carry him in a vimana, were fulfilled by him with remarkable accuracy through his divine power. His drawing devotees to himself at the time of their deaths even though they might be

thousands of miles away from Shirdi and his placing them in the best situations for their next birth, for instance, placing Pishya, Rohilla, Galwankar, Sapatnekar's child, and Baba Pradhan each in his mother's womb are all very remarkable and are not described in any of the Sutras of Patanjali or any of the Mantra Sastras, but are simply evidence of the omnipotence and omniscience and vast kindness to look after every devotee's interests, as our God and Guru Deva. Further analysis of his powers to trace their origin is absolutely unnecessary.

The way in which he used his powers, especially his omnipotence and omniscience are all clearly set out in the Gospel of Sai Baba or Charters & Sayings under properly arranged heads and in other books on Baba without such arrangements. A careful study of these will fill one with full appreciation of Baba's divine powers. It is mere idle curiosity or impertinence to go beyond the above and try to trace out the source of Baba's powers to Mantra Sastra etc.

The question, however, arises especially to metaphysical minded persons whether the doctrine of karma places a limit on the powers of Sai or God, whether there is a free will at all, or whether destiny has fixed up every item to occur in the future. Questions like these have perplexed and will perplex men to the end of time perhaps. Whatever may be the metaphysical solution of this problem, it is the best, wisest and the safest course for the main mass of readers to seek their safety and advantage by pinning firm faith with full bhakti in Baba and leaving it to him to deal with these questions.

There are passages in Charters and Sayings, for instance, where -from widely divergent and opposite inferences on the above matter may be drawn. But the safest course for a bhakta is to fix his faith firmly at Baba's feet, leave it to him to decide, and to guide us in every particular. This is Baba's own advice and many devotees have profited by adopting that course, and the reader cannot have any advice better than the above.

If any reader wishes to know what were the various ways in which Baba used his divine siddhis and the reasons for them, an exhaustive answer is, of course, impossible. Even a fairly full answer will take many pages. But as the

subject is one of vast importance and interest, a few paragraphs may be given here giving a very brief and very incomplete list of the above.

Of the siddhis which are said to be Ashta Mahasiddhis, directly inherent in God and God alone, according to verse 5 Chapter 15 of Srimad Bhagavata, 11th Skanda, there are *Anima*, *Mahitna*, *Laghima*, *Prapthi*, *Prakamyam*, *Eeshitwam*, *vashitvam*, and *Kamavasayita* (or *Paramananda*). These are found inextricably mixed up with the next succeeding ten, and the later five siddhis which are mentioned in verses 6 to 8. Hence some degree of intermixture of terms is inevitable, but substantially the power referred to under any head of the Bhagavata must in the case of Baba be attributed solely to his concentration on his God (Allah or Hari), and to his perfect laya resultant in the flow of divine powers to his surrendered soul. Hence in a very rough way we shall proceed to pick up, arrange, and bundle some of the reported manifestation of Baba's siddhis with a view solely to show how he utilised them for his benign purposes.

About *Anima*, one recalls what he said to Mrs. T. of Bandra and her son when they were with him at puja time. Baba said that he visited (by *Akasagamana*) in his *Leghima* body, their Bandra house to partake of the Naivedya, if any, offered there and that the usual naivedya (sugarcandy) had not been offered that day, a fact which he discovered by entering into that closed puja ;:x>m, (which means, by the exercise of *Anima* power). This fact of the omission to offer sugarcandy as naivedaya was discovered by Mr. T. only at the time of noon meal, and then he repented. The mention of the omission of sugarcandy in the naivedya was confirmed by Mr. T's letter written to Shirdi and showed the truth of Baba's visit to Bandra to that lady's house. There may be thousands of other cases, but this one will suffice to illustrate the points of *Leghima*, *Anima* and *Akasa Gamana*, and also to illustrate the more important truth that Baba, as the Guru God of his devotees, was observing the Gita dictum,

*Patram pushpam phatam toyam yo me bhaktya prayachati*

*Tadaham bhakti upahrutam ashnamy prayatatmanah.*

This means, 'When any bhakta offers a flower, fruit or water, with full bhakti or faith, that article offered with faith I accept and enjoy'. In the above

case, Baba told Mrs. T. on the day in question that he returned from her house on that occasion with unappeased hunger. Baba like Sri Krishna and other forms of God appreciates Prema or love and takes immense trouble to keep watch over his bhaktas, their puja, offering, and conduct with a view to ensure their welfare. As stated in B.C. & S.2, his eye of vigilant supervision is ever on those who love him. This loving universal watch at all times and places can only be termed divine. Similarly another instance is this. When H.S. Dixit was doing his puja at his Shirdi quarters and forgot to place betel and nut as part of the prescribed offering, and when later Dixit approached Baba at the Mosque Dwarakamayee, Baba asked him for the betel and nut to make his puja complete. Instances of this sort can be multiplied innumerable but the above would suffice.

His watchful eyes exposed attempts at wrong or fraudulent efforts of the devotees when they approached him. When N.V., a printer, knowing that Baba would ask for dakshina, handed over his coins to D.V. Sambhare, who accompanied him to see Baba, exposed his device by telling N.V. 'Give dakshina, and take it from D.V.S'. Similarly when persons intending to give certain amounts gave only a part and took away the remainder, Baba asked for the remainder. A woman intending to give eight annas gave only four annas, and kept away the other four annas. Baba said to her, 'Why cheat me, a poor Brahmin? Pay me the remaining four annas also.'

All these are instances of Baba's use of power to help devotees to complete their puja or vows. Proceeding next to *Mahima*, i.e., immensity and *Prapthi*, i.e., enjoyment through the sense of others, and also *Pmkamyam*, there are no particular cases to record. *Ishatvam*, the next item of the Ashta, i.e., exercise of power over all this includes "*Aparajaya apratihata ajnya*," "*yatha sankalpa samsiddhih*", *Aparajayam* means not being overcome; "*Apratihata ajnya*" means supremacy of orders, and *Yatha sankalpa Samsiddhih*, means the very thought becoming translated into fact and becoming effective.

Of these many hundreds of cases are recorded in Baba's Charters & Sayings and Devotees' Experiences. It is better to refer to these instances under the minor headings that we shall take up in succeeding paragraphs.

The seventh of the Ashta Mahasiddhis as given in Srimad Bhagavata is *Vashitwa* (i.e. non-attachment to sense objects, through self-control). This is a pronounced characteristic of Baba and may be easily understood by all as a saintly value. No one has pointed out even a single instance in which Baba was attached to any sense object. He told Nana, Jog etc., one day "prepare Pooran poli, *sanja* (kesari) etc." These were asked by Baba because these were considered delicacies and not because Baba had any liking for them or for Mangoes, Sitaphal, Guavas, etc. Baba was never a slave to sense attachment. As stated by him, his Guru Mourshed had taken him away from the *Dehatma Buddhi*, the delusion that a person is his body. Hence we can understand why there was no attachment in his case to sense objects.

The eighth siddhi which is the crown of all is stated in Srimad Bhagavata to be *Yat Kamah Tat Avapsyati* that is, the end of all desires. It may be interpreted negatively as the absence of all desires. But it is also interpreted positively as a state of *Parama Ananda*, i.e., the highest happiness described in the table of happiness, mentioned in the Taittiriya Upanishad.

The same terms are used in various books and by various people in different senses or suggesting shades of difference. These may cause some difficulty for a person who is anxious to have one definite sense always attached to every word. In the case of "Paramananda", or "Ramaswaminayudu", it is impossible for us to have a good grip of what is connoted unless we ourselves are in that state. As no writer, so far as we know, on these subjects has given us a definite description or definition of Paramananda, we shall take it that the highest conceivable happiness is included in this as the eighth of the Ashta Maha Siddhis which belong to Iswara according to Srimad Bhagavata 11 (35) 8. We may say a word or about that before proceeding to deal with other siddhis.

Sometimes people raise puzzling questions as to whether Baba is a *Gunatita*, a *Sthita Prajna*, a *Parama Jnani*, a *Parama bhakta*, etc., or whether he is in the absolute *kaivalya* stage. Without a grasp of the exact connotation of all those terms and a complete knowledge of Baba's state, it is impossible for one to give definite answers to these conundrums. Luckily for us, it is unnecessary to

furnish an answer to every question which may be raised. We might just note a fact or two about this Paramananda. This term was first used by a South African doctor, who first approached Sai Baba without full faith in him. Being conscious of his high Brahmin birth, he did not wish even to enter into Baba's Mosque or Dwarakamayee for fear of being polluted; but, contrary to his agreement with his Mamlatdar friend who took him there, he suddenly rushed into the Mosque and fell at Baba's feet and when asked for the reason, stated, 'This Baba is a *Yoga Sampoorna Avatar*. I am a Rama bhakta, having spent years with Rama bhakti but have had no Sakshatkar of Rama. And now for the first time I see Sri Rama with all his *chinhas* in the Mosque in the figure of Sai Baba. When I looked on Sai, I found he was Neelamegha Shyama Rama, my Ishta Devata, and hence I bowed to him.' He then made up his mind that as Baba was Rama and knew everything in his heart he would not go to the Mosque again till Baba should grant the highest desire of his heart, namely the perfect bliss of Satchidananda. Therefore for three days he abstained from going to the Mosque, though he was at Shirdi. On the last day an old chum of his came up and talking with him, he forgot all about his vow, and both together came and fell at the feet of Baba. Baba kindly asked him, 'Did any one send for you?' He felt ashamed' but seeing that Baba knew the secrets of his heart, hoped that Baba would grant his highest desire. And Baba did. During the succeeding days when he stayed at Shirdi, Baba filled him with the strange feeling of bliss which the South African doctor called "Paramananda", that is, a feeling of bliss not resulting from external or internal contact with any objects of the senses, but which filled the heart completely and gave it its highest satisfaction. This is our idea of Paramananda or Atmananda. The doctor was quite happy at having Paramananda or Atmananda with the help of Sai who to him was Rama being recognised by every real Hindu as God. If the question should be asked of that doctor whether Sai was a *Gunatita*, a *Parama Jnani*, or a *Parama Bhakta*, he would certainly answer that he was all these and more, namely, Satchidananda Himself.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. If a person could grant another Paramananda, he must have Paramananda in himself. That must be his nature.

Baba being perfectly free from desires, thoroughly self-controlled and ever dwelling upon God (Satchit Ananda) must certainly be soaked in Satchidananda. Therefore, of the eight divine 'Ashta Maha siddhis". if the eighth is treated as sufficiently expressed by the word Taramananda\ Baba had it. There was ample proof of it to those who were capable of drawing that Ananda on to themselves. The above mentioned doctor called Baba VI *Yoga sampoorna Avatar*', because he could at will display the Rama form over himself and show that he was having Godhead, Satchidananda.

This yogic power of displaying any and every form will be referred to later on as one of the siddhis, namely, *Kamarupa*, though this is much inferior to Satchidananda, which is just now being discussed. About Ananda itself, others who have practised yoga and who live up to Satchidananda and are competent to talk about it, have described Baba as 'A Yoga sampoorna Avatar<sup>1</sup> that is, one who had the fullness of the Satchidananda derived by yoga and that this Ananda came out from him at will.

Amongst the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, in the third chapter, the last verse of the Siddhi Chapter refers to *Kaivalyam*, the ultimate state of pure bliss. When they reach Atman or Brahman, Yogis are said to have the power of imparting what power they please to persons who come to them in a condition fit to receive the gift of bliss. G.S. Khaparde was a highly cultured Sanskrit scholar and had evidently read yoga sastra. He has referred to certain instances and experiences of his in his diary in the year 1911-12, while he stayed at Shirdi. Therein repeatedly he mentions that Baba cast Yogic glances at certain persons who were immediately filled with a wave of bliss, which overpowered all their other mental activities and kept them immersed in bliss for hours without break. Khaparde kept on for three hours or four hours enjoying such bliss after a yogic glance from Baba, and he has noted this in his diary. On some days, he says, 'Baba cast no yogic glance to-day'. This would imply that Baba himself was *Ananda sampoorna*, and could at will give a taste of that Ananda, a sort of foretaste at least (a Pisgah site of the Promised Land) to those who are competent to receive it. Others also have noted such a power in Baba.

The power to thoroughly grip one's entire mind has been set out already, and will be again set out amongst his siddhis. He had the power to completely black out some lines of thought, e.g., that of returning home from Upasani's mind for eight days after his first visit to Baba. This yogic power which blacks out completely unwanted thoughts would also evidently imply the power to give positive bliss to persons fit to receive it. If a person is comparatively free from sin and vice and could keep his mind sufficiently blank or sufficiently pure even for a while, any ordinary or sufficiently experienced hypnotist with a command of blissful thought could fill his mind with blissful thoughts over a considerable period, and Baba's yoga sampurna state enabled him to keep several people in such happy state, as they themselves have recorded in their experiences. Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiva Tarkhad says that though she had physical pains in her body and mental worries all making life quite miserable, yet when she went and sat before Baba, that very moment she felt steeped in Lethe, and all her anxieties, pains, cares, physical and mental, vanished. Till her departure from Dwarakamayee, she was enjoying a happy state.

A similar record is made by Mr Jehangir, who is called in the 'Devotees<sup>1</sup> Experiences', a Blerk. This Jehangir, a Parsi, though not acquainted with the holy books that Mrs. Tarabai and Khaparde had read, and though he had no ideas on the subject of yoga, still enjoyed this state mentioned by Mrs. Tarabai. When he went to Baba, he had his miseries and anxieties about the difficulty of getting his sister married, and the difficulty of getting his insane brother cured. As he sat before Baba for hours, all these thoughts completely left him. He was in Lethe and bathed in Baba's aura, the sense of perfect safety, and the feeling of happiness overcame him. This has been recorded in his statement, and he says that even after Baba left the body, he appeared in his dreams, and he had the same experience. All these go to show that Baba's powers over the mentality of others, which may be included in his yoga sampath, were used by him to confer happiness of the highest sort known to us, namely, freedom from all anxieties and physical pains.

Thus far we have dealt with the Ashta Maha siddhis. Proceeding to deal next with the ten major and five minor siddhis recited in Srimad Bhagavata, Skanda XI, Chapter 15, stanzas 6 to 8, we shall take up *Anurmimatrvam*.

*Anurmimatrvam* means freedom from hunger and thirst, sorrow and delusion, old age and death, etc. Baba exercised various powers, and he had no delusions and sorrows so far as we know and never suffered from the pangs of thirst or hunger. As for old age and death this was inevitable in his physical existence, as also to Avatars like Rama and Krishna. In Srimad Bhagavata, Krishna is said to have been attacked by *jara* (old age) at the age of 125. and according to the well established law that all things that have a beginning must have an end, bodies which have had their commencement must have their end. and so death and decay being the end, are the necessary consequence of physical existence.

The next siddhis are *Durasravana darsanam*, ability to see or hear things at very great distances in spite of obstacles hiding the view, etc. This can be called, when exercised by petty human beings, clairvoyance. When exercised by Baba, these are the results of his laya in God to whom there was nothing like *dura* or distance or space limitation. At the same moment Baba could be at Bombay and also at Shirdi, and Machendragad and Jejuri. Therefore, there was no question of distances for him. It was not necessary for him to see or hear. Without seeing or hearing he had the power to know, for his nature was pure *Chit*; and his *Pratibha*, the power of illumination, unrestricted by the ordinary limitations that bind other men, enabled him to see or hear at the same time what went on at different places and make use of that knowledge for the benefit of his devotees.

For instance, when the son of Thakersay Sait, the master of Kaka Mahajani, was talking to him at Bombay about the necessity of Kaka Mahajani going straightaway to Shirdi to ask Baba for his advice whether the Sait should or should not continue at Nasik for his health, Kaka Mahajani replied that Dixit was at Shirdi, that he could be written to, and that he would get Baba's answer. The son's reply was that would not suffice, and that the Sait would be satisfied by

nothing short of Mahajani's personal questioning of Baba. Baba knew the whole of this talk and told Dixit at that time at Shirdi, 'What talk is going on there? What deliberation?' When the next day Mahajani came, Baba informed Dixit that he was referring to this particular visit of Mahajani when he made his remarks the previous day. Dixit and Mahajani compared notes and found how Baba could simultaneously see and hear what went on at Bombay and Shirdi. So, this is referred to as a case of *Durasravana darsanam*. But as stated already, it is hardly worthwhile to try and classify Baba's powers under the heading we find in books like one mentioned above, or the Mantra Sastras. Baba is one vast mass of power, and, therefore, there is no use in analysing further. Still as there may be persons not convinced of the uselessness of such classification, we shall give some more instances of Baba's exercise of powers and see whether they can be brought under any of the headings mentioned in the above stanzas.

Leaving *Manojava* aside, we shall proceed to *Kamarupam*, that is, taking on any form or body, and also *Apratihata gati*, that is ability to go anywhere and ability to assume any form that one wants. Baba had undoubtedly all these powers. Baba appeared before Nachne's brother in the hospital in one form, at his house in another form, and at Shirdi, when Nachne saw him first, in a third form. Yet, Baba at Shirdi said, 'I went to this man's house. He did not give me *Eendibaji*'. That convinced Nachne that though the rupa or form that he saw at his house on the occasion of his brother's medical operation was different from Sai Baba's Shirdi rupa or form, it was still his. *kamarupa*, a form assumed by Baba at will. Similarly Baba assumed various other forms with various other people. Balakrishna Upasani states in his experience that at the Tapovan near Haridwar, he met a Sadhu who showed his rinanubandha with his family and used certain Hindustani phrases, meaning that there were two persons on the same tree or branch, one went up and the other came down. Baba, when he (Balakrishna Sastri) met him at Shirdi, used the same phrases to remind him of his identity with the Tapovan Sadhu. Thus, Balakrishna Sastri who found that the figure of the two was *the same, though the dress was different*, concluded that

Baba, who said never to have left Shirdi to go to Tapovan, could assume *Kamarupa*, that is, any shape in any place.

There are other occasions also in which Baba took up forms, suiting the occasion. The best instance, perhaps, of this taking up a form was that which is mentioned by himself, on the occasion of B.V. Dev's udyapana dinner, samaradhana, which he got up, after finishing a study. Dev had written to Shama and invited Baba for the dinner to be held at his place. Baba agreed. Later, not finding Baba at the dinner, he wrote to Shama complaining of Baba's breach of promise. When the letter came, even before it was read, Baba exclaimed, 'What! He complains that I did not go and attend the dinner? Tell him that I did come along with two others, and that I told him that I came not for money'but only for the dinner'. Then Dev remembered how a Sanyasi with two sishyas attended his dinner, and how he had said exactly the same thing and realised that Baba had appeared in the form of that Sanyasi to partake of his dinner.

These will suffice for the present to show that Baba could take *Kamarupa*. In fact, his visiting Mrs. T's house at Bandra to take the naivedya in *laghima* form or *Anitna* form, entering into the puja room to taste the naivedya. is another instance of *kamarupa*.

Amongst the 10 powers noted next in Srimad Bhagavata, 11th Skanda, Chapter XV, the 6th is *Parakaya pravesanam*, i.e., actually entering into the bodies, living or dead, of other creatures. We have no information of this power being exercised by Baba, and that may be due to the fact that there was no necessity for Baba to enter into others' bodies. As he declared, he was not the mere body called 'Sai', but the *Antaryami*, the innermost soul of every creature, especially of his bhaktas. As stated in Sainatha Manana,

*Ahamatma his chandorkar, sarabhutascaya stitah,*

*Pipilikamukhena aaddmi, makshikasya mukhenacha.*

which means, 'O, Chandorkar! I am the Atman or Antaryami residing in the heart of all creatures. I eat through the mouth of the ant that eats and the fly that eats'. Sai Baba is the Antaryami of all. To teach Chandorkar this, Baba once asked Chandorkar to bring 'polis' as Naivedya. When "polis" were brought to Baba, and

placed before him, flies and ants settled on the "polis". Baba then said that he had eaten the polis and that Chandorkar might remove the plates. Chandorkar could not believe that Baba had eaten the naivedya, because the polis kept on the plate before Baba were not even touched by Baba. Baba declared that he was the Antaryami of ants and flies that settled on the polis, and he had taken the polis as ants and flies. This statement appeared to Chandorkar as something out of scriptural text or a philosophical doctrine, and not an actual fact. Nana Chandorkar asked Baba, therefore, to enable him (Chandorkar) to perceive Baba's *Antaryamitva*. And Baba raised his hands and made some gestures, which revealed to Chandorkar that Baba knew the innermost secrets of Chandorkar's heart, and therefore, must be his Antaryami, and consequently the Antaryami of every creature in the Universe. It is this same Antaryamitva that Baba was meaning, when he said that Hansraj had beaten him, when he went as a cat to drink away his curds in order to save Hansraj from his disease, Asthma, (for which Baba had asked him not to take curds). Baba showed a weal on his shoulder corresponding to the stroke on the cat's shoulder by Hansraj. This must also be the meaning when Baba said that he went on the first day as a sickly Sudra to Khandoba temple seeking food from Upasani Maharaj who, however, did not give food but drove away both. Upasani Maharaj asked Baba whether he could be a sickly Sudra. Baba's answer was that he was in *all these and beyond*, a statement reminiscent of Purusha Sukta, *Sa bhumim viscvato avrutva, atyatishat dascangulam*. That is, 'He the Supreme (God) premeates the Universe and stands beyond by 10 inches'. This refers to God's *immanence* in and *transcendence* of the Universe.

That must therefore be the meaning of Baba who said, '*Maim Allahum, I am God*'.

The seventh item in the list of 10 siddhis is *Swachanda Mrityu*, i.e. power to depart from the world and one's mortal body at will. In 1886, Baba exercised this power and left the body. For three days, his body lay as a corpse as proved by a judicial document (the inquest report). Thereafter, like Sankaracharya, he returned to the body and lived for 32 years, i.e. upto 1918, which power to return

may be included in the 9th or 10th of the above list of siddhis. The 9th is called *yatha sankalpa samsiddhih*, i.e., achievement of everything at one's will.

The 10th item is *Aajna Apratihata Gatih*, i.e., having one's command carried out everywhere without fail. Almost ever)' one of Baba's mystic achievements, which does not come under any other heading, may be brought under these two. Baba himself said when he saved Balwant Khaparde from plague, 'My orders are supreme'. Similarly, he said to Nandram Marwadi in 1917 that he would not be allowed to die. BCS clearly shows Baba's sankalpa or will was supreme. Also when the danger of (B.C. & S.I-3) being killed by a cobra was awaiting Buty or Mirikar, Baba said, 'Strike, let me see how you can strike and kill!'. Baba's will was supreme notwithstanding all the '*ganda*' astrologers could read from his horoscope, notwithstanding all the cobras that approached the devotees (the children of Dwarakamayee).

Taking up the final list of 5 minor siddhis, the first is said to be "*Traikalika Jnana*" knowledge of the past, present, and future, and the third is *Parachithabhijnata* i.e., knowing the contents of other people's minds in which the past and present are sure to be included. This power of reading thought from others' minds has become very common, and many persons are able now to exercise this power to a smaller or greater extent.

The further power not merely to note the contents of somebody's mind but to note the state of things at any particular place at the present time or at any previous time, which is called the power of "*clairvoyance*," is also to be found widely prevalent though not to the extent that thought-reading is prevalent. That may be the reason why these siddhis are assigned a lower position in Srimad Bhagavata and included in a minor list. Any person with a sufficient degree of calmness getting into a trance intentionally or unintentionally not infrequently discovers that he has a capacity to reflect, like a mirror, the minds of other persons and not infrequently the state of things in any particular place at that particular time or at previous times. So many persons calling themselves 'thought readers', "astrologers", "mantravadis", and "nadi yogis", make use of this knowledge and not infrequently they read into their nadi granthams what they

have recently discovered about the past or present. In the Madras City, for instance, there appear to be numerous persons with Nadi Granthams now. These facts show that very probably these faculties may develop in man more and more till they become a common accomplishment with the coming race. At present the performances of these have defects, and they are mostly failures when they venture into the future and try to foresee coming things. Sometimes people are tempted to compare these performers with great saints like Sri Sai Baba, who have *Trikalajnatva* and *parachittadabhijnata*. But this is like comparing fireflies or glowworms with the SUN.

The best performer that has exhibited these powers in recent times under these headings to Sai bhaktas is found to be very petty, very weak, very low and limited when compared to Sai. If they dare to compare themselves with Sai, one feels that one should address them thus, '*Jyoti Rinkana Na Kirn nu manyase, Yat tvam eva timireshu lakshyase*'. This means, 'O, glow worm, do you not know that your light in darkness serves merely to show where you are? Can man make use of its light?' One thing with these professional practitioners or incipient sadhus is that they make an effort to get into a trance, and while in the state of trance and only then they can reveal the past or present, or know of things, and that too, to a very limited extent. While they are in their trance, their normal consciousness cannot work and after some time the trance ends and their normal consciousness resumes its sway, and in their normal consciousness, they can exercise no power.

In the case of Sri Sai Baba, his *Trikalajnatva* and *parachita-abhijnata* were there all the time when he was normally conscious and required no effort, and the extent to which he could see and know was unlimited. It was not merely the minds of persons present that he knew, it was also of persons, thousands of miles away. It was not only places near him that he could view with clairvoyant powers; he could see things hundreds of miles away. What is more, he can appear there with material form and also do things necessary for the benefit of devotees there, such as, applying udhi to Babalkar's son and assuring Babalkar himself that the boy would recover in the morning, and should be brought over to

Shirdi later, and then to disappear at will. He could also reveal the past 2000 or 10,000 years back and reveal the future that is to operate fifteen years later.

These powers of *Tirodana* or *Avirbhava*, i.e., disappearance or appearance, referred to in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra are stated by Patanjali to be the ordinary result of adoption of a certain procedure, though, of course, in Sutra 50, Patanjali states that *Samyama* or concentration on the *Purusha* (with a difference) will give one any power he wants, i.e., omnipotence and any knowledge he wants, omniscience.

This is practically the same as *yatha sankalpa samsiddhih* and *Trikalajnatva*. For knowledge in the phenomenal world is knowledge always of things or events at some time, past, present or future, and at some place, near or remote. Therefore, *Trikalajnatvam* (Verse 8) for practical purposes would be the same as Omniscience and *Yatha Sankalpa Samsiddhih* and '*Ajna apratihata gati*' in verse 7 of Chapter XV of Bhagavata, would be the same as omnipotence practically.

The third of the minor powers is what is known as *Sthambana* in mantric books and what verse 8 describes as, *Agni arka ambu vishaadinam pratishthambhah*. This means, arresting the force of (1) fire, (2) the Sun (3) water, (4) Visha (poison), etc. Baba's wide exercise of powers has included many cases that can be brought under each of these heads. He specifically ordered the flames of the dhuni within Dwarakamayee which once shot up so high as almost to catch up and burn the rafters above to come down. He then took his little stick and struck a pillar near the fire uttering the words, '*Sabur, Sabur - Hat Mage, Hat Mage*', that is, 'Moderate yourself, get back, get back'. The fire within a very short time moderated itself and got back, There was no further danger to the building. This can be brought under the minor head or under the above words of verse 7, *Yathasankalpa Samsiddhih • Ajna apratihata gatih*. He ordered Agni (fire) and the winds that were fiercely blowing not to spread the fire from Kondaji's stack of hay to the neighbouring stack in the village hay yard. And nothing but Kondaji stack was burnt.

The following is a very interesting incident of *arkasthambhan*. On a hot summer noon, the atmospheric heat became unbearable, and as soon as puja arti was over, the devotees left the Dwarakamayee, where the puja was done and only 3 or 4 were left behind. Baba told them to remain and sit near the fire. Within a very short time, a cool breeze was felt to be blowing where the men sat. This is the *Sthambanam* of, (*agni, arka, vayu*) Sun, Fire and also Vayu included in *aadhinaam*, i.e. etc".

As for control of water, water might be in the cloud as rain or in a vessel, and Baba controlled both these. Once when Megha was to take only a little of Godavari water brought by him in a pot all the way from Godavari for Baba's bath and to sprinkle just a few drops on the head, as the chief organ of the body, Megha in his over-enthusiasm turned down the whole of the pot on the head of Baba. But wonder of wonders, the water wetted his head only and fell on the ground without touching his clothes or body. This is *jala sthambanam*.

When M.W. Pradhan wished to start from Shirdi, the sky was cloudy, and it was drizzling. There was a downpour near Shirdi and on the Shirdi Kopergaon road the streamlets on the roads were sure to be filled with flood water and prevent the passage of tongas. When Pradhan feared that Baba would consequently not give him permission to start, Baba uttered the following words, '*Allah! barsati pura kar, Mere bache garko jane wallai hai, Vske sukse janede*'. This means, 'O, God. Stop the rain. My children wish to go home. Allow them to go home safely and easily'. Accordingly in a very short time the rains stopped and Pradhan and party to whom permission was given to go to Kopergaon on their way to Bombay, had no difficulty. This is obviously *sthambanam* of a storm-wind and rain put together. On another occasion a fierce storm with thunder and rain filled the Shirdi lanes with water and the villagers ran to Baba to pray for safety. Baba spoke fierce words and bade the storm cease. In a few minutes, it ceased.

About arresting poison, there are numerous cases when Baba arrested the poison of snakes and scorpions. Even now his udhi is used effectively in the case of scorpion and other poison. But the following is a striking instance of

*Visha Sthambana*. Shama was bitten by a snake of the venomous class (which is in plenty at Shirdi). He was advised to go to Biroba's temple as was the usual custom in those parts to get rid of the poison. Biroba and all Gods to him were in Sri Sai, and so he came up to the Mosque. But as he approached the three steps leading up to the Dwarakamayee, Baba in a furious tone threatened and swore and uttered the following words in Hidustani:- '*Brahminvar Mat Aav, hat mage, hat mage*'. This meant 'Do not get up Brahmin, get down'. The furious face of Baba made Shama think at first that these words were addressed to him and that Baba meant that he should not get up the Dwarakamayee and that he should go back to his house. He was shocked and perplexed at being so treated by his only resource and Palladium, His God, Deva Sai. But in a minute Baba calmed down and said, 'Come up. That fakir (God) is kind. You will be cured'. Baba then told Shama's companions, Tatyā and others, to take him home and see that he was kept awake and moving and not allowed to go to sleep for 24 hours. On their following that advice, the poison was arrested, and Shama was cured. The words in the above sentence were addressed to the poison, and it was the poison that was not to go up the Brahmin, but to get down, (*brahminvar-mat Aav, hat mage*).

Under the heading *Sthamban* sub item (5) above referred to, any number of cases may be cited, but we shall just refer to the following and stop.

'*Lagudo Uddhrita Rohilla Sthambhanath dharpanasakah*\ mentioned in Sai Sahasranama refers to the following facts. A hefty, and strong fanatic whom people at Shirdi called Rohilla (Muslim Jat of Rohilkand) was reciting *Kalam* at nights before Baba's Masjid and carrying on other orthodox Muslim practices. He was greatly puzzled about Baba. On the one hand, Baba's vast knowledge and power made him think that Baba was Parvadhigar, God on Earth. But Baba's permitting himself to be worshipped at the Mosque to the accompaniment of the noisy drums, pipes, and the recital of Mantras, and his acceptance of offerings made to Vittal, Datta, and other Gods, whom orthodox Muslims regarded as Satan, this Rohilla thought to be opposed to Islam. He felt shocked by Baba's saying that all these i.e. Vittal, Datta, etc., were all Allah. In accordance with the

Islamic traditions that the destroyer of Religion should be destroyed, he determined to kill Baba who was in his view destroying Islamic religion by such irreligious practices. Therefore, one day he came behind Baba with uplifted club in his hand and determined to end with a single stroke Baba and all his heterodoxy. Baba, who, of course, knew everything, knew this man's mind and power also. Baba suddenly turned and faced this Rohilla, and fixing him with a glance, touched his left wrist (the right one was held aloft with the cudgel). The effect was immediate. The man lost all power to hold his cudgel or stand. He fell down all of a heap. Baba left him there and went away. For several minutes the Rohilla lay there. When asked to get up by others he declared that Baba had robbed him of all his powers. So he had to be lifted up. This was an excellent instance of *Sthambanam* or *Pratistamba* mentioned above.

Instances of sthambana may take various shapes. When boys from Bombay tried to take a photograph of Baba, they found that the photo showed only his feet and not his body.

Perhaps the prevention of Upasani Baba for the seven or eight days after his first visit from thinking of going home and making him return on the eighth day, (though he had declared that was impossible) might be treated as a case of *sthambana* coupled with *Akarshana* and *Mohana*, which are minor siddhis mentioned in the Mantra Sastra.

The above classification has followed Srimad Bhagavata. But many of our readers would probably be familiar with the miracles of Jesus and would like to see how Sai's miracles are to be viewed in the light of Jesus's sayings about miracles and his performing them.

One common feature of both Sai's and Jesus' lives is that people always had to be convinced of the divine nature of the two only through the miracles they performed. Miracles are a concession that divinity allows for human blindness. When Jesus said to Nilko... 'I saw you under the fig tree before Thomas talked to you there,' the conclusion was at once drawn by the addressee, 'Surely thou art the Son of God'. Jesus said that he would see more wonderful things indicative of divine power. Again when Jesus cured a person stricken with palsy and unable to

rise from his bed, saying 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk', and the man with palsy rose up and walked, the conclusion was drawn that the miracle was a token of Jesus's divinity as also when Jesus cured a man of leprosy.

Some reader might desire to know whether similar incidents happened in Sai's history. First about palsy, a Marwadi had a young daughter of eight years or so with palsied legs. She could not walk to Baba, and therefore had to be carried in a chair, palki or stretcher. She remained with Baba for three days. Suddenly her legs which she could not bend at all till then were stretched out and the second day she could stand. Thereafter, before she left Shirdi on the third day she could walk back. No application, medical or surgical, was made to her. This cure was purely by Baba's will power with his blessings offered with udhi applied to her. Again there was a patient who was suffering for years from inflammation of ulcer in his stomach or bowels, and he could not eat any food. He was brought to Baba. Baba ordered sweetmeats to be purchased and brought and placed before the patient. Strange to say, the man was able to eat them.

Bagoji who was suffering from *leprosy*, was allowed by Baba to shampoo his leg. People were afraid that Baba would be infected by his leprosy. On the other hand, Bagoji's advanced leprosy left him with only scars and marks. In the presence of both Sai and Jesus, evil spirits, obsessions (*abhicharas*) were terror-stricken. The devils said that Baba would beat them. Persons like Mrs. Tipnis, Mrs. Mantri, etc., overcame their spirit obsessions purely by Baba's blessings. In all these cases it was pure divine blessings that operated, while we see in Kusa Bhav's statement that he could overcome these evil spirits with yantras, mantras, tantras, etc., the process known to Mantra Sastra as *Uchchatana*.

Proceeding to *Aparajaya*, the 5th of the minor siddhis, mentioned in the said verse, any one reading Baba's Charters would note how his powers are supreme, not only in his curing Balwant Khaparde of .plague but also in so many other cases.

In Srimad Bhagavata itself, after mentioning 23 powers, verse 9 of Chapter XV says, "what is there impossible for one who has perfectly surrendered and got absorbed in God?" Baba's powers are innumerable; we have

here given only a brief outline. Any student of Sai's life and leelas can learn about his other leelas in detail.

Therefore it is hardly necessary to further lengthen this already long chapter; and we shall close it by saying that Sainath was a *Yoga Sampurna Avatar* (as the South African doctor declared) and a *Samartha Sadguru* and that when he is pleased he draws all of us to him, not merely by his ancient leelas but also by his recent leelas such as those at Ramachandrapuram, Thotapalli Hills, Shanti Ashram and Ahmedabad. We should no longer ignore this splendid opportunity and the splendid messages, especially that which was addressed to this very author through the Ahmadabad wakil for the purpose of this book itself in the following words, 'Write and tell him Narasimhaswamiji that / *am always looking after my devotees*'.

## CHAPTER XI

### **Baba's Recent Lilas in the South and Their Purpose**

After 1935-36, that is, after the broadcasting of Baba's wondrous nature, powers and lilas - through Madras 'Sunday Times' and through many books and booklets, etc., faith in Sai Baba spread like wildfire throughout the country, especially in South India. Numerous persons were anxious to start their contact with Sai Baba and were helped on therein by remarkable experiences gained by them or occurring in their neighbourhood. The single experience of an instant cure of fits, for instance, in Velampatti, a village near Vellore, converted the entire village to Sai faith. Instances of this sort abound, the earliest of which in the South was perhaps that of Nagabhairva Venkataratnam of *Ventrpragada* near Vijayawada. He and his wife had been married seventeen years and all that time she had not conceived even once. By making vows to Baba and visiting Shirdi they obtained the blessing for issue in the shape of a daughter whom they gratefully named Sai Prasada (i.e., gift of Baba). To further immortalize the fame of Baba and his wondrous lilas, with the help of friends they constructed at Ventrpragada a pucca Sai Mandir with Dhuni (ever burning fire as at Shirdi in front of Baba) and accommodation for guests, and this has been attracting crowds all these dozen years and more. This and the Tenali Mandir at Tenali

built by the exertion of the veteran bhakta Dr. Ramana Ammal, (whose methods of curing patients were not always medical, but included also prayers to Baba) were the main big Sai Mandirs till three years ago in Andhra Desa. Then the star-shaped Kurnool Sai Mandir was built by Veeraswami, a bus contractor at a cost of over Rs.2 lakhs.

In 1942, Coimbatore, famous for its salubrious climate and numerous mills became yet more famous by reason of the development of, and its becoming the chief centre for, Sai bhakti. Captain Devaraj, a Military Medical Captain, a native of Coimbatore, had to serve in the Mediterranean during the War on board a ship, which was bombed by the enemy. Though the ship suffered damage by the bombing, this Sai bhakta was perfectly safe, and returned safe to his country and home. Sundararajan, a fellow townsman of his, built a small cottage (temporary hut) as a Sai Mandir, and had Sai bhajan conducted there as also at his house in R.S. Puram. In January 1943, Baba began to show his lilas there at the Mandir. One evening at about 5 p.m. Sai bhajan was going on there and a snake moved up fairly near the assembled crowd and was facing the picture of Sai Baba and remained listening to the music of the bhajan. From 5 p.m. it continued to be there frightening none and harming none, neither frightened nor harmed by any. After 9 p.m. the bhaktas went back to their homes, and when they arrived in the morning, they were surprised to see that the snake was still there near Baba's picture. Knowing full well that Baba appeared in various forms including serpents, they got a thousand chrisanthemum flowers, and standing on all sides close to the Snake (cobra) Baba, did their Ashtotra puja, showering the flowers on the cobra. This went on for a time and all the while the cobra did not budge. Then they prayed that the Baba snake should not move until a photographer came and took a photo of the Snake Baba in the midst of the flower heaps to immortalize his (Baba's) visit to Coimbatore in the form of a snake. After some hours, a photographer turned up and had an excellent snap of the cobra with uplifted hood in the midst of the puja flowers. Then the Snake Baba was given milk naivedya, which was tasted, and camphor light also was offered. It was only at 11 a.m. next day, that the cobra that had arrived at 5 p.m. the previous day, left

the premises. During these 18 hours the news of Naga Sai's visit to the shrine went round the town and a great number of people came and had darsan of Sainath, and thus Coimbatore town, with its tens of thousands of population, drank deep the Sai faith. On the above mentioned spot, a building costing over Rs.40,000/- has been built, and further lands and structures have been added thereto, the total cost running up to six figures. All journals, including Sai journals, spread this Naga Sai manifestation throughout India, and the local earnestness of devotion was strong enough to support the Sai Baba mission with a Girls' school accommodated in a grand building with vast grounds.

Baba's lilas abound throughout India, and our selecting only a few of them for mention here, especially South Indian places, might appear invidious but in view of recent messages of Baba, mention of a few lilas seems to be necessary. In any case, after mentioning two more Andhra Desa lilas, specially attractive to the curious and scientific mind, we shall wind up this chapter with a lila in the North, that is, north of Andhra Desa.

Let us take *Ramachandrapuram*, a place 24 miles away from Rajahmundry in East Godavari District. There Srimati Krishnabai, the wife of Sri K. Seshagtri Rao, Superintendent of the office of the Accountant General, Posts and Telegraphs, Simla, had very extraordinary experiences and special favour granted by Baba. She had studied only up to I Form. When she and her husband were living at Nagpur, he had remarkable experiences. He was in charge of the special treasury keys, which he kept locked up in a drawer in his office, and the key of that drawer alone was taken away and kept by him. One morning when he came, the keys were missing, and despite hectic searches by himself and his peons, he could not trace the keys. Then he suddenly prayed to Baba to save him from the effect of such loss, and he once again went to the drawer and opened, when lo and behold! Right in front of him in the drawer were the very keys he was searching for all the time, and which could not have escaped his sight if they were there earlier. How they disappeared and reappeared Baba alone knows, but the main favour and lilas of Baba relate to his wife.

Srimati Krishnabai's father, a retired station master (Hanumantha Rao by name) was living at Ramachandrapuram. When her husband came from Nagpur to Ramachandrapuram, and was starting back to Nagpur, the lady suddenly took ill. What the illness was could not be discovered. But she was positively apprehensive of death and pointed to some invisible figure in the room saying that that person was the Yamaduta, and so there was no use giving her medicines. Yet some medicine was given, and the husband placed Sai Baba's picture beneath her pillow. Suddenly she awoke at night and cried that she was being dragged away. Her father found that a part of her body was dragged away and her legs were dangling. He restored the body back to the cot, and later she told her father that Sri Raghavendraswami, the family deity, and Sri Sai Baba were protecting her, and that they had left under the pillow a packet that would save her. The father looking under the pillow discovered that there were tulsi leaves of large size and sacred earth (like that at Mantralaya, Raghavendraswami's place). These were applied to her. Again when her husband was downstairs, and she was alone in her room, she was found talking, and she declared that Sri Raghavendraswami and Sai Baba had given her advice and teachings. Sai Baba began to protect her as they could easily see.

At her puja of Baba, miraculous events were taking place. At the close of the puja, she would deliver for more than 45 minutes pravachanams far beyond the capacity of a first form student. Again the plantains and flowers, that were offered to Baba, were covered over with inscriptions. For instance, when the Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Sri G.V. Chetty, took a *Nilamala* (a huge garland of about a thousand roses) and placed the same on Sai's picture, thousands of 'Sai' in Telugu or 'Om Sai' were found on all the petals in a very short time written by some invisible hand. The naivedya she placed before Baba were accepted and consumed by Baba, a fact evidenced by a part of the offerings missing after puja. On the plantain fruits placed before Baba, inscriptions appeared in Tamil, Telugu, Hindi or Gujarati or English and these were mostly answers to questions by bhaktas visiting her puja room. The

inscriptions included Sanskrit verses from Yoga Vasishtha, Gita, etc., which were far beyond the capacity of that lady to understand or repeat.

A most remarkable fact is that Baba appeared and said that she had eight more births to take, and that he would exhaust the karma of those births by making her die and get back to life eight times in this very life. So during her periods, she turned a vivid blue, and persons near her thought her dead. On each of these occasions, the *Kolam* marks, (i.e. border lines) around her cot with Baba's udhi would mysteriously appear, disappear and then reappear after Baba's reviving her. Baba invariably revived her, and he enabled her to develop *clairvoyance* and power to read the past lives of herself and other bhaktas that came there, and report Sai's reply to people's questions. She is adopted as the Guru or Sadguru by a number of people from far and near, from places like Nagpur, etc. She not merely gives them instructions and upadesa but also manifests *chamatkars* for protecting them.

One Ramachandra Rao of Nagpur came along with Seshagin Rao and lectured at the All India Sai Samaj during 1953 giving a full account of all the above. The mounting bhakti roused by that lady has helped in the construction of a Sai Mandir at Ramachandrapuram with a marble idol of Baba with Radha and Krishna installed on the occasion of the last Ram Navami (1954).

We may next proceed briefly to Baba's lilas at *Shanti Ashram*, Thotapalli Hills, which had long been famous as the residence of His Holiness Sri Omkar Swami who toured America and other places and is conducting two Ashrams, one at the foot of the hills and the other at Visakhapatnam town, and publishing the organs of the Ashrams, 'Peace' in English and 'Shanti' in Telugu. This Swamiji has written valuable works, like 'Cosmic Flashes' etc. While the Swamiji was largely believed to be interested in and developing the philosophical side, suddenly from March last a wave of Sai bhakti began to manifest itself in his Ashram. By Sai's Grace his Ashram at the foot of the Thotapalli Hills, when visited by Srimati Ratnamma Garu of Rajahmundry (Mother of Kaku Rama Rao) and her friends, became a place of great bhakti development. In March last these ladies with others were conducting 'Sai puja' with intense devotion in the

Thotapalli Shanti Ashram. Noticing their earnestness, and the miracles of Sai, His Holiness Sri Omkar Swami devoted his own meditation room for Sai puja and called it 'Sai Mandir'. At first it was a weekly puja on Thursdays to Sri Sai's pictures, and on the first two puja days, Baba accepted (consumed) pan of the coconut offering placed before him. But this was not sufficiently impressive. Ratnamma Garu and others prayed to Baba to write his name on the offerings made. Accordingly when flowers and other things were placed before Baba, and the door of the room was closed as per custom, Baba's writings or inscriptions in Telugu of the letters 'Sai' appeared on the flowers, fruits, and coconuts that were there and also on cashewnuts. Sri Rajaji, who was taking a very active part at the Ashram, offered his gold ring and prayed to Baba that 'Sai Nama' should appear on the ring also. (That ring is now with His Highness The Maharaja of Mysore). Others offered their chains, watches, and other jewels and placed them before Baba. The Telugu letters 'Sai' appeared on all these. The Sai Pracharaka P. Viswanatham from Rajahmundry went up to Thotapalli Hills Shanti Ashram and placed his silver watch and prayed that Baba might write his name clearly so that he may show the same to others and thus intensify his pracharak work. By Baba's grace, 'Sai', appeared on the lid of the watch in Telugu. Then at the request of an ardent bhakta who placed before Baba a ball of udhi, Baba's writing appeared as 'Sai Mandu' (Medicine of Sai Baba) on the udhi. A bit of this was administered to a patient who was suffering from high fever. He was immediately cured. There was a cow in the Ashram with udder disease yielding brackish milk. After the udhi was smeared on the body of the cow, the milk given by the cow was no more brackish. It became sweet. *Sai Mandu* has been used at various places with good results.

His Holiness Sri Omkar Swami himself was so much impressed with Sai's lilas that he determined to have a picture of Sai Baba, and began worshipping it, as Sai is only a form of God. In his own private worship also Baba's lilas were exhibited. Once he placed an Australian apple before Baba in the cupboard and a good portion of the apple was found eaten up. When he placed a bottle of honey tightly corked before Baba and retired from the room, he found on his

return that the cork had been extracted and that about 2 ounces of honey were not found there evidently accepted by Baba.

The Ashram inmates began to have great faith in Baba. When a lady was returning from Swami's chamber to her own quarters, on the way she trod on a snake, and at once cried out 'Om Sai'. The snake did not hurt her, but quietly moved away and disappeared. The Swami on Rama Navami day dictated an article in which he explained to his devotees and the public the phenomena that were taking place in his Ashram and gave a general invitation to any one who had Sai bhakti to go to the Shanti Ashram<sup>2</sup> and have their communion with Baba. He appears to have issued subsequently a second invitation (both of which appeared in the Telugu 'Shanti' dealing with Sai lilas at Thotapalli Shanti Ashram). What is the purpose of the Sai lilas in these places in Andhra Desa? One marked feature of Andhra Desa is that it is full of social and political ferment, and easily catches up new ideas and gets them widely circulated and absorbed. Sri Sai Baba has evidently found just a few places suitable here to respond to his call which may act as nerve centres from which all surrounding parts could receive quickening of life. Not only the above places, but Kurnool and Repalle have quickly responded by building Sai Mandirs, and sent abroad messages of inspiration and faith to even distant places. That is sure to have a very gratifying response in the near future.

There is a very simple indication of the effect of the stimuli given in South India and Andhra Desa, Mysore and adjoining parts, and that is a tide of passengers in the trains proceeding to Shirdi, Kopergaon, and the daily crowd visiting the Sai Mandir at Shirdi, Abdulla Jan in 1939, when he gave his statement, said 'There was usually vast crowd at Shirdi preventing people from approaching Dwarakamayee, and all that has gone now'. Obviously he implied that even Baba's splendour like that of so many Maharajas had faded away and

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- <sup>2</sup> The address of the Ashram is: "Shanti Ashram, Shanti Ashram Sankhavaram-533 446, E.G. District. The Manager Sri Rajaji kindly undertakes to send replies either for udhi or for other information.

could not endure. Now, if Abdulla Jan visited Shirdi on any day, especially a Thursday, he would find that the crowds are again there. This time the crowds are in thousands and include persons from distant South India and Andhra Desa, who form probably the majority of the crowds of every day. This fact may give the clue to Baba's display of his lilas in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Desa as stated above. It was a Tamilian that was chiefly used by Baba for starting the huge wave of Sai bhakti that State after State in India covered so many towns and villages.

The Southerners' bhakti to Baba has evidently still an important part to play in moulding the future of Sai faith and in the progress of the spiritual field. It is Madrasis, Andhraites and Mysoreans, Southerners as a whole, who have carried the 'Leaven of Sai bhakti' to all distant corners of the country such as Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, etc., and have even carried it across the seas to Rangoon, Singapore, Aden, West Africa, South Africa, Europe and America.

There is very probably an important part for Southerners to play in getting Sai movement more extensively and intensively carried forward everywhere. Though one cannot be dogmatic in these matters, one may presume that there may be such a purpose for Sai in his choice of places in his manifestation of the lilas in Andhra Desa and Tamil Nadu. None should draw the conclusion that other parts of India have not been favoured with Baba's chamatkars and lilas. Ahmedabad, which is far north of Madras, about a thousand miles away, has been the scene of Baba's bhakti spreading and lilas manifesting. Sri Ratilal Shah and other bhaktas, who have also their contact with Adoni Sai devotees (Adoni is in Andhra Desa) have established Sai bhakti in and around Ahmedabad. They have published books in Gujarati dealing with Sai, and they have also built a Sai Mandir at Ahmedabad.

## **CHAPTER XII**

### **Baba's Teaching as to Siddhis**

Baba had bhaktas at various stages of advancement, and he certainly knew at what stage and in what manner siddhis appeared. Baba gave some

advice to his bhaktas which might be recorded here. In the course of concentration on one's Guru or God or any other form of God, one gets more and more calm, placid, and in a certain number of cases, the latent powers of reflecting the minds of others, and the light of objects is spontaneously acquired. The first effect of such powers is to make a man proud and next full of desires for use of the powers to achieve earthly ends, and consequently tends to dip him deeper in the world of samsara and take him farther away from the main object of all sadhana, namely, God.

This is well known to students of Mahabharata Shanti Parva, where a certain sadhaka named Konganava acquired the power to use his glance as a terrible weapon by which he could burn up creatures or objects. Another acquired the immobility of body whereby birds in the air were induced to use tufted hair on his head as a place for building their nests. The latter was highly elated and jumped with joy that birds could nest in his head, and had to be taught later that this species of pride could only tend to degrade him and take him away from God. As for the former, Konganava, it is narrated that when he went under a tree to practise yoga, he saw a bird, up above him, and by darting a glance at it killed it and it fell down dead. Thinking no worse of himself for this performance, he proceeded as advised by a teacher, to two great jnanis so that he might learn jnana. One of these was a lady living with her husband and her children. When this Konganava arrived at her house, she took no note of him except bidding him 'be seated', and continued her anxious attendance on her husband and daily household duties. The man considered himself slighted and thinking very highly of himself on account of his powers, felt it was extremely improper on the part of that lady to treat him with such scant respect. While he was thinking so, the lady came near and he darted a fierce glance at her. At once the lady calmly asked 'O, Konganava, do you think I am the crane in the forest, that is, the crane which you killed in the forest?' The man was aghast. He could not imagine that a lady in a household could have the powers of knowing what happened to him and to the crane far away from her ken. He was duly humiliated by her utterance and then learnt that the duty a woman owed to her husband was primary, and those due to

guests, beggars, etc., were only secondary, and that a man who indulged in anger was far inferior to those who were able to keep their temper, and that the real end of life was to attain calmness by concentrating on God and one's primary duties with *anasakti* in a detached manner.

Corresponding to this there was a teaching by Baba, which we find in Baba's Charters & Sayings 338. A sishya of his, by pranayama and concentration, had developed clairvoyance. While he was in his puja room, he could see distinctly that his distant mill hidden away from his room by so many walls, streets, etc., was aflame. Naturally he felt exultant at the acquisition of this power. When his peon on his opening the door broke the news that his mill was on fire, he answered, 'Yes, I know it'. Some time later, this devotee went up to Shirdi along with his wife. Baba then addressed him 'Why are you gazing at the strumpet's performance? I can never exhibit tricks. It does not behove us to dally with a strumpet'. The wife understood nothing about Baba's references which were really to the meretricious attractions of siddhis acquired by pranayama. She thought that Baba referred to a fleshy concubine or a woman of the town. But the devotee fully understood that Baba referred to his being charmed by the acquisition of clairvoyant powers by the use of pranayama, and that Baba was giving him the warning which Gurus, as a rule, gave against people being carried away by Siddhis. In Patanjali's Yoga Sutra 52 and Sutra 38 the advice is given by the author of the Yoga Sutras that the ordinary worldly use of siddhi powers are really obstacles to Samadhi (which must of course be on God), though these powers are useful in the worldly state. This is expressed in Sutra 38, *Te samadhow Upasargah Vyuttane Siddhayah*.

*Baba's Teaching as to Siddhis*

Sutra 52 runs thus —

*Sthanyupa nimantrane sanga smayakarnam punah anishtaprasangat.*

This means, 'The yogi should not feel allured or flattered by the overtures of celestial beings for fear of evil again'. Sutra 52 has special reference to siddhis one of which says that a person having a particular siddhi can enjoy the pleasures of Gods in their celestial regions. Hence it is easy to see from both the

Sutras and in Baba's advice, the use of siddhis may be good or bad and both are referred to not only in Bhagavata, Skanda XI, but also in Baba's advice and actions. Baba gave a warning to a devotee who was just beginning to develop powers, which is just the stage at which curiosity, ambition and other worldly motives or desires arise from the appearance of siddhis within the grasp of the sadhaka or devotee. As for Baba's action, any one who has gone through this book would note that Baba made ample use of innumerable siddhi powers and, therefore, there is nothing wrong in the use of siddhi powers. All great ones including Sri Krishna have used their divine powers or siddhis. It is wrong to suppose that the use of superhuman powers by those is condemned as worthy of condemnation. But it is their use possessing them in such a way as to promote worldiness or cause degradation to the soul that is objected to. A man like Konganava or like the man on whose hair birds sat, gets elated and angry and thus loses his soul. That is the result of gazing at the meretricious attractions of siddhis with a worldly heart. Only in that case siddhis are strumpets and not in any other case. This is the chief point of Baba's teaching.

A man has a Guru; and he may be his Kula Guru without any siddhi powers. When the man finds other Gurus possessed of siddhi powers, he is often tempted to give up his former Guru and resort to the latter. Baba's advice on this matter is 'Do not give up your Guru whatever may be the attractions of other Gurus.' If one has implicit faith in one's Guru and an earnest desire to pull oneself upward with that Guru, free from worldly attachments, one will have siddhi and satisfactory progress. Therefore, to a man called Pant, who came to Baba, having already a Guru (who had objected to his going to Baba because of the fact of his already having a Guru), Baba said, 'Pant, do not give up your Guru. Whatever may be the merits of other Gurus, we must never give up our own'. There are a few people who have studied the lives of great saints who led holy lives and have given the warning that meretricious attractions of siddhis should not be heeded. Their sishyas are sometimes apt to draw the conclusion that saints who exhibit powers and magicians who exhibit such powers for worldly objects are both in the same class, and that the saints mentioned above are not

worthy of regard. This is due to a confusion of ideas. Unfortunately a certain number of educated, even amongst Sanyasis, have not escaped this fallacy, and some of them occasionally asked this author whether Sai Baba who exhibited these *chamatkars* could be a *Parama Jnani*. The answer is *Parama Jnana* is not taken away when the *Parama Jnani* happens to be a *Samartha Sadguru* and has to use his divine powers for promoting the interests of his sishyas and other devotees. It is hardly necessary to labour this point, but the author has met a few well intentioned devotees of good saints who fell into this error, and that is why this has been written. There is no question of inferiority or superiority amongst saints merely by reference to the possession of siddhis. Possession of siddhis merely indicates advancement in concentration and sometimes they are an indication of *poorna laya* in Parabrahman. Therefore it is safest to avoid drawing hasty conclusions from their mere presence or absence in a saint.

Thinking that it would enhance the glories of Baba to put forward fantastic notions about his being an *ayonija*, that is, one who came into this world without entering into the womb of a woman, some people fall into the unfortunate habit of creating stories about Baba. The *Ayonija* theory, as already stated, has no shadow of support for it amongst the statements made by Baba himself in respect of his parents either in this Janma or any previous Janma.

Coming to siddhis also some people have circulated stories about Baba's use of various forms of siddhis. For instance, it is said that he performed *Kandayoga*, that is, separated the various parts of his body and kept them far apart and appeared as a dead body, and later on reunited those parts. It is unnecessary to discuss whether *kandayoga* is a case of mass hypnotism or individual hypnotism creating the impression in the mind of the beholder that the body is in pieces. Physiologically the body cannot be cut into a dozen pieces and kept apart for a long time and reunited at pleasure so as to form one organic whole, and hence the probabilities are very much in favour of this siddhi being the same as or similar to the obstruction to seeing - *antardhana* - following which heading, Patanjali says, a similar *antardhana* of ideas takes place. That is, a yogi

can make his entire body invisible to people or he can black out their ideas about his body.

We have seen magicians performing these tricks by mass hypnotism and suggestion, for example, the rope trick and stabbing the boy in the box. These are all cases of mass hypnotism and suggestion. But whether in the case of Baba there was really any kadayoga and what exactly it represented, are matters about which definite information is not available. Again it is said that Baba performed other yogic feats, that is, that he took out his entire entrails and placed them on a tree for drying up. These confound our notions of physiology and serve no useful purpose. We shall not discuss these further. About Ashtanga Yoga, it is not known whether Baba performed pranayama, etc., but very probably these would have come to him easily by faith in his All-powerful Guru. Various siddhis or mystic powers are shown by various sadhakas or Siddhas or magicians who use disembodied spiritis or evil spirits or petty elves, etc., for their purposes. The question has been raised what Baba's views were on this subject, and what Baba said about spirits at all. A young devotee asked Baba, 'Are there evil spirits that would harm us?' Baba's answer was that there were spirits but we had nothing to do with them. Those who are under the care of Baba or leading proper lives have nothing to fear from these unseen spirits. Baba has mentioned not infrequently several things about disembodied bodies, that is, *pretax*. That is, those recently died pass into a linga sarira and keep on life in that state for a certain time. Such spirits are not infrequently used by magicians like Mohamad Bay for giving them information about the contents of the minds of those they meet for their own worldly purposes. Baba referred to the existence of the spirits of disembodied persons, that is, spirits of those who recently died, and mentioned interesting facts about them.

The spirits of deceased people who are his bhaktas or who belong to his bhaktas families were drawn to Baba at the time of death, even though they may be dying very far away from Shirdi, where he lived when in the flesh. All the same, he drew them to himself, and he said of Sri M.B. Rege's child, 'That child is here (pointing to his heart), and it shall live here eternally'.

He said of Sri Upasanai Baba's third wife, who died about the beginning of February 1912, that she had come to him, and there was no necessity to do anything further to give her *sadgati*, as Upasani Baba was offering some Rs.10 for some ceremonies to be done by Baba to give her Sadgati, following evidently his usual Vaidiki ideas of funeral rites. Baba declined to receive the amount saying that she had already come to him and that all that had to be taken from Upasani, had already been taken. As for Mrs. S.B. Dhumal, some months after she died, Baba advised Mr. Dhumal to perform her Masik at Shirdi and promised to give her Sadgati on that occasion. That was accordingly done.

As for other spirits, Baba said that some spirits haunted tombs. There was a young girl, a playmate of Baba, who had died and who was haunting her tomb. Baba passed by that side and found her spirit there. Then he said that he spent some time by the side of the tomb, and then took her away with him to a pipal tree at or near Shirdi and placed her spirit there evidently for purposes of betterment of her soul.

As for evil spirits, fiends, etc., Baba knew of their existence and kept them at bay. No fiend could approach him, and persons possessed by fiends got released from such possession by being near Baba. Baba therefore advised his bhaktas to be free from all fear of spirits of any sort. When Baba was near, what had his children, the children of Dwarakamayee, to fear, whether from the living or from the spirits of the dead or from evil spirits like elves, Brahma Rakshas, etc.? His own Guru Gopal Rao Deshmukh had given salvation to a Brahma Rakshas that had formerly been a Brahmin miser, and Baba's vast powers and charity should have certainly enabled him to render similar help to any of his devotees who may have been placed in that same predicament.

*Jai Sri Sai Ram*

## **APPENDICES**

(Referred to in Part-1)

APPENDIX I

## **Baba is inscrutable—a sphynx**

More Babaku marma na Janare Koi (More)

1. Koi Kahe donge Koi pakhandi  
koi kahe divaana re (More)
2. Koi kahe lobhi koi kahe bhogi  
koi kahe bade syana re (More)
3. Koi kahe yogi koi kahe Tyagi  
koi sadhu janare (More)
4. Koi Guru sadguru Vako  
koi Iswara jaana re (More)
5. Sri Babaki Siddhavasta  
Koi Virala pahchana re (More)
6. Apana Apana sab phala pave  
jisne jaisa jaana re (More)
7. Mehbub, Sabaki suni para,  
Turn mat dhoka khanare (More)

Which means

None knows the inwardness or secret of my Baba

1. Some called him hypocrite; some, heterodox; some called him mad
2. Some called him greedy, some sensualist; some called him a wise sage
3. Some termed him a yogi, some a self sacrificer, some a sadhu
4. Some called him a Guru, a Sadguru, some knew him to be (Iswara) (.Divine.
5. Sri Baba's state is that of the siddha. Some alone see him as different (from all)
6. Each gets a reward suiting his own idea (of Baba)
7. Oh Mehbub (author of this song). Do not get confounded by listening to (i.e. accepting) the views of all.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **The Bhikshu's Ways of facing insult and trouble**

In Srimad Bhagavata, Bhikshu Gita, Chapter XXIII we find the rationale or the intellectual basis of one's equanimity in the face of insult, trouble, etc., set out

in great detail. We may refer to the essence of what is said therein. A rich Brahmin miser, on account of miserliness, got into bitter terms with his relations, friends, and almost every one and his property also was lost. Then he began to realise the absurdity of relying upon riches for happiness and determined to adopt a monk's role, and he took up his danda (staff), kamandalu (begging bowl), etc., and went about. But several people recognised who he was originally and began to give him trouble in various ways. Some mocked at him, some others plucked away his staff, begging bowl, etc. and professing to return them plucked them back. Some passed water in his begging bowl and took delight in tormenting him in various ways. But these tapatrayas, troubles of all three sorts, coming from the animal kingdom or from the body or from finer forces, he was able to endure philosophically being assured in his mind that they were all the *result of his karma* and so inescapable by him. He convinced himself that the pains he endured just like the pleasures he had were *all due to his mentality* and not to any other causes. Therefore he resolved that his only course was bravely to appeal to God, completely surrender to him, and face all pain and pleasure with thorough indifference based on surrender to God. He found that the persons who gave him trouble, who were considered to be the cause of his pain, were really not the cause of his pain. He analysed the situation thus: the causes of the trouble given may be stated to be one of six things, namely, (1) the body of the troublesome persons, (2) the finer forces, Gods, etc. presiding over the organs with which they gave trouble, (3) the Atma or the spirit that ensouled those people, (4) the trouble might be due to planetary positions in his horoscope, (5) previous karma, and (6) to Kala or Time. He thus dealt with each of these six causes. (1) So far as their bodies were concerned, they were insentient and it was the bodies of the troublers that troubled his body; and if the troublers were treated to be mere bodies and he also should be treated as a mere insentient body, then there was nothing to complain. It is one part of insentient nature troubling another part, though both together form one nature. In a particular organism sometimes the teeth bite the tongue, and his present trouble was in no way different. If the teeth bite the tongue, what is the person to do? Whom is he

to blame? (2) Again, if their organs which trouble his organs be considered to be the movement or action of the Gods presiding over their organs, for example, Indra presiding over the hand or the Moon presiding over the mind, what does that matter? He himself was not an organ but the Pure Atman. The hand of those persons was striking his hand. So it is Indra striking Indra, Sometimes even our own hand may beat the other hand in our own body. Who is to complain against whom? All together form one. (3) As for the third consideration that the troublers should be treated neither as their bodies nor as the Gods presiding over their organs, but as the Pure Atma alone, what is there to complain of? Atma cannot injure itself. There is nothing besides Atman to hurt the Atman. Therefore, there is no matter for complaint. (4) Taking up the fourth cause of trouble, namely, planetary action, that is the position of the planets at the time the injured or suffering person was born, this also is inapplicable. The planets can only affect that which is born, namely the body. But I am not born. I am the soul and so the planets cannot give me pleasure or pain. Besides books on astrology say that some planets fight with others by *Padavikshanyam*, *Ardha Vikshanyam*, etc., and they take the position of the Sun, etc., in the 8th or 12th house from the Lagna. If one planet fights against another, what is that to me, the Atman? (5) Next, if karma is the cause of all pleasure and pain, who does what karma? The body cannot perform any Karma. It is insentient. The Atma being Pure Intelligence cannot do karma either. Therefore there is no cause for pleasure and pain to me, the Atman, who is independent. (6) Taking the last, that is the question of Kala or Time, I, as the Atman, am the soul of Kala or Time. Does fire burn itself or ice chill itself? So, there is no reason for anger or discontent. So, the fully realised person, that is, the person who has fully surrendered himself at the feet of God, has no one to blame because his mind is not turning to the question of troubler or blamer but sees only the Supreme Person, Iswara in every one including the Troubler. Hence full faith in and surrender to God is the best basis for *titiksha* (endurance) and the wise man must control his mind by concentrating it upon the feet of God.

### APPENDIX III

## Derivation of Guru

- I. Guru means 'Great', or Mahan,
- II. Guru Gita stanza 44

*Gukaarascha andhakaro hi Rukaras teja uchyate  
Ajnaanagraasakam brahtna Gurureva Na Samscaayah*

This means: *Gu* means darkness and *Ru* is light. As light swallows up darkness, Guru is Brahman, the Swallower of darkness, without doubt.

*Stanza 46*

*Gukaarascha gunaatito, Rupaatito Rukarakah  
Gunarupa vihinatvat Gururityabhidiyate.*

This means: *Gu* means Gunatita, that is, beyond the senses, *Ru* means Rupaatita, that is beyond all form.

As the Guru is beyond all gunas and forms, the Guru is so termed.

*Stanza 47*

*Gukaarah Pratamo varno Maayadi Gunaabhasakh  
Rukaro Asti param Brahma Maayabhranti Vimochakam.*

This means, *Gu* is the first letter, and that is Maya appearing as Gunas. The next *Ru* is Param Brahman, which removes Maya bhranti, that is, the delusions of Maya.

*Sanza 91*

*Gukaaram Cha gunaatitam Rukaaram Rupavarjitam  
Gunatitam arupam cha yo dadyat sa Guru smritah*

This means, *Gu* is Gunatita (beyond the gunas) *Ru* is Rupa Varjita, (that is free from form). Guru is so called because he is Gunatita and Arupa and enables us to be Gunatita and Arupa i.e. to realise our self as beyond form and all attributes.

## APPENDIX IV

### Question of Caste

It has been noticed in Chapter XV (Part I) that amongst the objections raised to Sai Baba's worship, one is based upon caste. Some objectors say that Baba is not a Brahmin but a Muslim, and so he should not be taken for a Guru nor worshipped by Brahmins and other Hindus. Such objections have generally

been driven out by personal approach to Sai Baba even apart from B.C.S. 57 & 505, 506. His very darsan has made sensitive or suitable people feel that Sai Baba is a divine agent to show a way out of all temporal and spiritual difficulties. Feeling thus, the visitors to Baba bowed, prostrated and surrendered their Tan-Man-Dhan to Baba. This was *prapatti*. To such a person a discussion about Baba's caste would be absurd, for he has already followed the direction in Srimad Bhagavata, Skanda Purana, Brahma Vidyopanishad 334 and Guru Gita, that the Guru must be treated as all the Gods put together (*Sarvadevamayo Guruh*) including Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, and all the pantheon of Hindu Gods. Even after His Mahasamadhi some have had such contact. It is those who have not been fortunate enough to have such contact, mental or physical with Baba, that have to struggle with the question of caste, and for their benefit, we mention the following:—

Even supposing that they do not feel that Baba is God, still there is no basis for the assumption that Baba is not a Brahmin. Baba himself said that he was a Brahmin, that his masjid was a Brahmin's Masjid (BCS 57) and he also said that his parents were Brahmins of Patri and that his Guru was also a Brahmin (Venkusa or Gopal Rao Deshmukh of Selu). This is enough to prove Baba's Brahmin birth and initiation or Brahminism according to ordinary ideas. But, as a child, for four or five years he was brought up by a Fakir and lived all his adult life in a Mosque at Shirdi, and so he passed for a Muslim. He was totally indifferent whether people called him a Hindu or Muslim. But some would-be Bhaktas are making enquiries, and therefore the question seems to be important.

The authorities are very clear that about Parama Jnanai or a Parama Bhagavata or saint, especially with remarkable siddhis, psychic powers and spending all his time and energy for the benefit of mankind, the question of origin, i.e., whether he is a Hindu or Muslim by caste, is not permissible. For instance, verse 14 of the Guru Gita says—

*Sva asramam cha Sva jatim cha*

*Sva Kinitn pushti vardhanam*

*Etat sarvam Parityajya*

*Gurum eva samascrayet*

This means, 'Brush aside your ashrama, your caste, your reputation and all glory and take refuge with a Guru'. There are many more authorities of the same sort. The feeling of this caste or kulam in a disciple is false *pascam* or bond, one of the eight which the Guru in his kindness cut off (See G. Gita verse 129). The enquiry into the origin is generally discouraged, for example, by the motto—

*Rishi mulam nadi mulam na vicharyam*

Kabir also gives the same direction.

Sant *Ka Jat Mat pucho. i.e.* 'Do not ask for the caste of a saint'

Narada Bhakti Sutra 72 says, (Among them prevails no distinction of caste, erudition, beauty) lineage, wealth, profession.

Anyhow, what is the definition of a Brahman? Is it a question of birth or parentage? The answer is, 'No'. Manu is a great authority, and Mahabharata is another great authority. Both say 'No'. Manusmriti, X, 65 says—

*Sudro brahmanatam eti brahmanaschaiva sudratam*

*Kshatriyat jatam evamtu vidyat vaiscyat tathaiva cha*

Manusmriti, II, 157, 168 say—

*Yatha kashtamayo hasti yatha charma mayo mrigha*

*Yashcha vipro anadhiyanath trayaste namadharakash*

*Yo anadhitya dvijo vedam anyatra kurute scamam*

*Sa jivan eva sudratvam ascu gachchati sanvayah*

This means, (Manusmriti, X 65) 'The Sudra becomes a Brahmana and a Brahmana a Sudra (by conduct). Know this same (rule to apply) to him who is bom of a Kshatriya or of a Vaiscya'.

Manusmriti, II 157, 168 mean 'A wooden elephant, as a leather patched deer (of the Taxidermist), such is an unlearned Brahmana; the three are but Nominal Brahmins etc., Only in name are they Brahmins etc.'

'The Brahmana who, not having studied the Vedas, labours elsewhere, becomes a sudra in that very life together with his descendants.'

In Mahabharata, Vana parva, Chapter 313, verse 108 say— 'It is not birth nor samskaras nor Vedic studies nor one's kulam nor ancestry that form the cause or basis of one's being a Brahmin or Dvija or twice-born. M.B.V.P. ch (80) v-21, 25, 26 say that the cause or basis is mere *vrittam* i.e. behaviour or conduct. A Brahmin's conduct should be (1) *truth* (2) a disposition to give (*daana*), (3) *Kshama*, (forgiveness), (4) *sceelam* or virtue (5) gentlemanliness, (6) *tapas*, and (7) mercy. These make a man a Brahmin. If these are seen in a man, whatever his birth may be, he is a Brahmin, and if these are not seen in one, whatever his birth may be, he is not Brahmin. Vishnu Bhagavata says that *Bhakti* makes a man a Brahmin and only Bhakti. Other authorities say Brahma Jnana, God-realization makes a man a Brahmin.

As to Truth, Chandogya Upanishad IV (4) says that truth speaking to one's own disadvantage indicates Brahminhood. Baba was the soul of Truth

The question is, 'Was Baba a Jnani? 'Baba who said '*Maim Allah hum*'—I am God and I *am all* - was undoubtedly a Jnani of the highest order and he had all siddhis resulting from concentration on God, and he was always remembering God. So undoubtedly Baba was Brahmin and necessarily a Brahmin.

Manu, Vishnu Bhagavata VII (II) 35, reads:

*Yasya yallakshanam proktam, pumso vArnabhi vyanjakam*

*Yad anyatrapī driscyeta tat tenaiva vinirdiscet.*

This means, 'Whatever qualities are said to be indicative of a caste will, if found in any person, entitle that person to be considered of that caste'. Sridhara's comment on the above is, 'Brahmins and other dvijas are recognised by *Scama* (peace) chiefly—and not by birth'.

Brahmavidyopanishad, verses, 2, 3, and 4, are as follows:

2. *Hamsa vidyam imam labdhva Guru scuscruhaya Narah,*

3. *Atmanam Atmana Sakshat Brahma Budhva Sunischalam*

*Dehajatyadi sambandhan varnascrama samanvitam*

4. *Vedasscastrani chanyani padapamsumiva tyajet. Gurubhaktim soda kuryat screyase bhuyase Narah. Gurureva Harih Sakshat Na anya iti abravīt scrutih.*

These mean:—

2. By service to the Guru, Hamsa Vidya is obtained.
3. (Thereby) one realises oneself as Brahman steadily. Let one ignore the body, its caste; etc., varnas and asramas, etc., and
4. The injunctions of Vedas and Sastras and others treat them as the dust of his feet. Let him have devotion to the Guru. That will benefit him greatly. The Guru is no other than God—the Vedas declare.