

Preface to Part III

The task undertaken in this biography is to sketch how Baba's influence spread out like a tiny banyan seed into dimensions which fill up forests. The way in which this force, obviously a divine force, is being worked is mostly hidden and cannot be completely grasped by any one. But persons can have with some bhakti and effort a rough idea of the main lines of march. The most important way in which the influence of a divine spirit expands is the very magnetism it exerts. The magnetic Baba with his wonderful qualities and power to save his devotees from every harm, including the danger of death and to provide all things necessary for one's temporal and spiritual welfare, naturally attracts the various pieces of steel called devotees to Himself. In some cases, no doubt, the attraction is based upon rinanubandha, but whether due to that or not, the force is exerted and persons are pulled to the wonderful dynamo. Baba said, 'I draw my devotees to Me from thousands of miles even and they come to Me first under one pretext or another, i.e. for the purpose of getting one worldly gain or other, and after their needs are satisfied to some extent at least, they adhere to Me and their welfare here and hereafter is looked after'. Most bhaktas that we have noticed in Part II were drawn (Upasani Baba and Khaparde) for specific temporal gains, but they stuck on and became very good adherents of Baba. In the case of a few, it is not the temporal gain that attracts. It is something within, something unintelligible, just like love at first sight of a pure girl and a pure bachelor. There is something that attracts and, things being favourable, the love grows stronger and stronger, and what was once a thin silk line becomes as strong as a ship's cord. In the case of Mahlsapathy, we have already noticed that his attachment began with his great love for all holy ones and his noting that Baba was very high in his purity and lofty nature and was respected by even the locally residing saints like Devidas and Janakidas. So he began to worship Baba and the more he worshipped, the more he loved, Baba returns the love of his devotee ten-fold and a hundred-fold. If the devotee takes one step towards him, Baba takes ten steps towards him. If the devotee gives him one rupee, Baba

LIFE OF SAI BABA

gives him ten rupees in return, and what is more valuable than rupees or earthly goods is that Baba shields him with all his wonderful power and saves him from harm by using his *Prathibha* (omniscience) or *Antarjnana*, noting what dangers are present in each place and what dangers await a devotee at what hour. Thus the devotee perceives that the only God that he is going to see and get the benefit of is this living Sai and gets powerfully attached to him. Baba used to say to Mahlsapathy 'You go; I am with you. There are thieves (snakes) near your house. Take a lamp.' Mahalsapathy found that every letter of Baba's statement was truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Baba used and uses his wonderful *Prathibha* or *Ritambhara prajna* for the benefit of the devotees whom he drew and draws calling them his own children. Each one of these devotees gets magnetised by Baba's dynamo and in turn attracts others without any propaganda or preaching. Mahlsapathy got thoroughly ennobled, and fit for Sadgati. For he said at the time of his death, 'I am going to heaven', and he passed away in perfect peace and purity substantiating the truth and correctness of his statement. The example of Mahlsapathy must have influenced hundreds and thousands of persons who came to Baba, and saw Mahlsapathy and Baba, though Mahlsapathy was not a propagandist or a preacher. Similarly other lovers of Baba sacrificing their all to him, their avocations or life, their property, their soul, and their all to him and loving him with an ardour which knows no limits, have become powerful propagandists without their knowing that fact. People saw how they prospered under Baba's care, and flocked in numbers to Sai Baba in the flesh or to his Samadhi knowing that he still lives after his Samadhi and still guards and provides for all his bhaktas. Hence, in showing the development of the Sai movement, the most proper course would be not to give a short account of the chief lovers of Baba. The total number of lovers of Baba would be innumerable, and having enjoyed his protection, any ordinary human being must overflow with gratitude and love, and myriads were in that condition. But we should select here just a few whose contact was particularly noticeable and who therefore may be now regarded by any sensitive reader as being the magnet through whom the original Sai Baba

LIFE OF SAI BABA

dynamo is drawing him to itself. The chief of these lovers and the earliest is Bayyaji Bai, the wife of the Patel of Shirdi village. When Baba first visited the place, this Bayyaji Bai was unaccountably attracted to Baba's service. She found that Baba was pure and without knowing anything about his future siddhi development, went on attending to his wants and supplied him with food. Even when he was rambling away from the hamlet into jungles not minding the time for meal, this pious and loving Bayyaji Bai would run out in quest of him, look for him under tree after tree and after finding him, place his meal before him and wait patiently till he ate it. Baba in those early days was given to much of Adhyatma or introspective study and devotion. Earthly wants did not bother him. He would go on thinking and thinking. From his later statement we find that he was thinking of Allah or the "fakir". By this term he would denote his Guru and his god, for the two were blended into one for him. It is by that wonderful concentration, all powers developed in him. As is stated in Srimad Bhagavata, Skanda XI, Chapter XV, "What power is impossible for him who perfectly concentrates on God and thereby merges in Him?" So, when Baba was neglecting his own body, this lady ran up and served him out of pure love and not with a view to obtain any material gain. That is the true test of love, namely, getting deeply interested in and attached to a person without caring for any benefit by way of return, but the law of justice, law of God, as represented by Baba also, is that self-sacrificing love, especially in serving persons absorbed in God, never goes for nothing. Srimad Bhagavata XI (17) 44 says—

Samuddharanti ye vipram seedantam matparayanam

Tan uddharishye na chirat apadbhyo nouriva arnavat.

This means (Krishna says) : 'Those who support fully a God-absorbed man in his troubles (physical), then I (Lord Krishna), will support and lift up from all dangers and calamities, just as a boat saves a man fallen into the ocean'. So Baba did support and lift up Bayyaji Bai and her family with wonderful consideration, sympathy, and love. For instance, her son Tatyā, about whom more will be mentioned later on, became rich by Baba's grace. All his troubles were averted. But it is not the anticipation of coming benefit that moved Bayyaji Bai. It was pure

LIFE OF SAI BABA

unadulterated love for the sake of love. This love descended from the mother to her son Tatyá Patel. The phenomenon appears to be most unaccountable, but Baba furnished the key for this unaccountable and powerful cord of love of Bayyaji Bai. Baba said, This is my sister in previous janmas, and she has always been supporting me.' Therefore, this unaccountable and powerful love was due to the fact that it is a continuation of unseen but powerful vasanas of previous births. The Bhagavad Gita says:-

1. *Purvabhyasena tenaiva Hriyate hyavasopisah.*

This means, "man is drawn by the tendencies of his previous lives even against or in spite of his own will".

2. *Tatra tarn buddhi samyogam labhate Pourvadehikam.*

This means, " The ideas and tendencies of one of birth linger in one in the next". Bayyaji Bai was drawn by her previous vasanas to Baba. In the case of the other lives that we are going to discuss hereafter, we may take it that mostly it is the unseen vasanas operating from the distant past in former lives that accounted for the love. Bayyaji Bai's deep love, as we said already, has been the seed of a whole forest of lovers springing therefrom. Bayyaji Bai followed the bent of her nature and served Baba and passed away. But as will be seen from the following account of her son that love was continued and developed through her son, who attracted the attention of and became the medium of love for numerous others.

LIFE OF SAI BABA 5

| | |
|--|----|
| ABOUT HH PUJYASRI B.V. NARASIMHA SWAMI MAHARAJ: | 6 |
| BABA'S LOVERS | 7 |
| R. B. PURANDHARE..... | 8 |
| SRI SANTARAM BALWANT NACHNE, DAHANUKAR..... | 25 |
| DAMODAR SAWALRAM RASANE | 38 |
| Mrs. TARABAI SADASIVA TARKHAD | 45 |
| M.B. REGE..... | 52 |
| RAO BAHADUR S. B. DHUMAL | 64 |
| H. V. SATHE | 73 |
| G. G. NARKE..... | 82 |
| SRI NARAYAN ASHRAM, SANNYASI OF WAI | 93 |
| KUSA BHAV | 96 |

LIFE OF SAI BABA

| | |
|---|-----|
| RAO SAHIB YESHWANT JANARDHAN GALWANKAR..... | 100 |
| SRI RAO BAHADUR MORESWAR W. PRADHAN..... | 102 |
| BABA'S CONTACT WITH MUSLIMS..... | 110 |
| CHOTE KHAN | 117 |
| ABDUL..... | 124 |
| ABDUL RAHIM RANGARI | 129 |
| ABDULLA JAN | 131 |
| ADAM DALAI..... | 136 |
| B. V. DEV..... | 136 |
| P. R. AVASTE | 141 |
| CHAKRA NARAIN | 148 |



This image of Sai Baba was unexpectedly delivered at the residence of G.R. Dabholkar, author of Shri Sai Satcharit during Holi festival in 1917 in accordance with Dabholkar's dream.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Volume – III

by

LIFE OF SAI BABA

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About HH Pujyasri B. V. Narasimha Swami Maharaj:

HH Pujyasri B. V. Narasimha Swami Maharaj came from an orthodox Brahmin family. He did his Law from Madras Law College and set up his legal practice at Salem, Tamilnadu. He soon rose to great heights in his profession and was in the forefront in the freedom struggle. While attending a Pithru Shraadh ceremony in his home, Swamiji suffered a rude shock when his two children drowned in the well outside. The terrible tragedy made Swamiji give up all family and worldly connections and he became a wandering traveller, bent on knowing the ultimate Truth in Life. His quest took him to the ashrams of various saints and sages, spending a few years with Sri Ramana Maharishi, Sri Meher Baba and finally to Sri Upasani Baba of Sakori in search of, as he termed it a precious 'Kohinoor' – the Supreme manifested in a saint who could satisfy his spiritual quest! Sri Narayana Maharaj whom Swamiji met in his travels near Poona, had assured him that he would get the 'grand jewel' that he was after. Prompted by Sri Upasani Baba one of the foremost disciples of Shri Sai Baba, Swamiji visited Shirdi and it was from the tomb that Supreme, in the form of Shri Sai Baba bestowed on him Grace and gave his Sakshatkar, Swamiji had found his grand jewel 'the Kohinoor'!

Thereafter Swamiji spent his life in writing, building temples and meeting people in the service of Sri Sai Baba. In 1953 he started writing the "Life of Sai Baba", the crest jewel of all his publications. "The Life of Sai Baba" is an immortal classic, an immense work of 1,000 pages in four volumes weaving a vast tapestry of detailed analytical and authentic Life of Sri Sai Baba.

BABA'S LOVERS

- 1. R. B. Purandhare**
- 2. Sri Santaram Balwant Nachne, Dahanukar**
- 3. Damodar Sawalram Rasane**
- 4. Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiva Tarkhad**
- 5. M. B. Rege**
- 6. Rao Bahadur S. B. Dhumal**
- 7. H. V. Sathe**
- 8. G.G. Narke**
- 9. Sri Naraya Ashram, Sanyasi of Wai**
- 10. Kusa Bhav**
- 11. Rao Saheb Yeshwant Janardhan Galwankar**
- 12. Sri Rao Bahadur Moreswar Pradhan**
- 13. Baba's contact with Muslims**
- 14. Chote Khan and others**

15. **Abdul**
16. **Abdul Rahim Rangari**
17. **Abdullah Jan**
18. **Adam Dalali**
19. **B. V. Dev**
20. **P. R. Avaste**
21. **Chakra Narain**

R. B. PURANDHARE

We have already dealt with this matter in part. Of the order possible among Sai's lovers as regards the order of chronology, and the order of merit, all the orders luckily coincide in the case of Bayyaji Bai, the first and the greatest lover of Baba. Tatyapa Patil comes second both chronologically and in point of merit, that is, the extent of love. The number of lovers of Baba after Tatyapa is too great to discover any chronological arrangement among them. On the other hand, we are obliged to pick up some cases in which there is a good account of the experiences of such a lover of Baba. For that reason, we might take up R. B. Purandhare as an example. Possibly there may be others who far exceeded him in love for Baba and who were drawn to Baba before him. In fact, Radhakrishna Ayi and Abdul Nivaskar seem to be brilliant gems of love that came earlier; but of none of them have we got such a good account as Purandhare. Purandhare in a long account of his experiences has given a very interesting and fairly full description of his contact with Baba. We cannot avoid however mixing up Tatyapa with Purandhare and others, because the line of parallelism and other common features run very much together in these cases.

The great question in the case of the lovers of Baba is, how can we possibly describe the extent of love and its intensity. Love is not a thing measured by a thermometer or by the quantity of good or sacrifices rendered, though all these do count. We may roughly begin a statement of how love works and then deal with Purandhare's case. When two persons are greatly attached to each other we find that no other expression would describe the situation than love. Friendship,

LIFE OF SAI BABA

admiration, gratitude, loyalty, faithfulness, regard, worship, all these blend together in many a case, as it did in Purandhare's case also. So, let us begin an account of how Purandhare's love began.

In the case of most people approaching Baba within the last decade of his life, they were impelled to go to Baba by hearing accounts of Baba. Das Ganu was mostly the source of this inspiration. Das Gnu, though himself not pre-eminent in his love for Baba, had the wonderful charm of eloquence and some amount of real bhakti. He was an expert in the Kirtankars' line, that is, in telling harikathas about saints and holy persons. He generally began with an account of the day's topic, say, Tukaram or Namdev, but he always kept Sai Baba's picture close to him and never failed to refer to Sri Sai Baba as the present day illustration of greatness of the bhakti of the ancient or mediaeval saints. He would say, 'Here is Tukaram's great love and greatness in surrendering to God and getting the most marvellous benefits. If you wish to know if there is any such person now in the flesh who can give you the same benefit, then I will tell you 'Here is this Sai Baba. He is present day representative of medieval saintship. What Ramdas was to Sivaji, that Sai Baba is to innumerable people who approach him in the proper spirit'. Then he would give an account of some of the marvellous lilas and dealings of Baba with his devotees. Thus, besides the fact that thousands attended his kirtan, his account and inspiration would pass on from one to another, and after his kirtan people, having learnt of Sai Baba, would rush to see him. It is rarely that one gets a chance to meet a Tukaram in the flesh, a Namdev in the flesh, and if one gets a chance, surely one does not wish to lose it. so, having heard of Sai Baba from Das Ganu and others. Purandhare's nature was fired with the ambition of contacting Sai Baba. Purandhare's own nature was very simple and highly emotional. He was a plain man and did not care to twist and turn phrases in describing things. When he found that Sai Baba was a powerful saint living in the flesh and was showering benefits like Ramdas. Akkalkote Maharaj and other Samarthas, he naturally wanted to take the earliest opportunity to go to Shirdi and that he did. In his case, going to Shirdi was not an easy matter. he was only a petty clerk on Rs. 35 per month. he had to support a family of four or five including his mother, his wife, his brother and a child. yet, the spark of enthusiasm in his heart did not find these to be difficulties. He fixed upon a certain day to leave for Shirdi, and if we see what he did, we will see exactly what love does. He was naturally to go with his wife and mother. But his young child was unwell and the mother thought that it was foolish to risk taking a little child with fever for such a great distance. Bombay to Shirdi. Yet, Purandhare would not brook a denial of his wishes. He must go and he

LIFE OF SAI BABA

would leave and take the child with him inspite of his mother's protest. Look at this! He is taking risks with his only child's health. And what for? To meet the great Sai. The burning enthusiasm of his love for Baba bore down all considerations of ordinary precautions or medial advice and they did go. His love was accompanied by intense faith. So, Baba justified his faith and his love in what followed. When the child was taken with an illness to Shirdi, it quickly regained health instead of suffering. this is a *chamatkar* of Baba and it is these *chamatkars* which first tell upon an emotional mind. Upasani Baba says,

*Aneka Ascruta Atarkysya Lila Vilasam
Samavishkrita Isana Bhasvat Prabhavam*

in his Sai Mahima stotra, composed in 1912. That is Sai Baba's divine or superhuman character was evidenced by innumerable and unheard of miraculous achievements and *chamatkars*. Yet he was

*Ahambhavahinam Prasannatmabhavanam
Namami Iswaram sadgurum sainatham.*

Purandhare found that his child's health far from being ruined by the journey was set right completely at Shirdi. This in itself was sufficient to constitute one of those *Aneka Ascruta Atarkysya Lila Vilasaih*. here is Baba's superhuman power. here is kindness towards those that flock to his feet. If supreme power and kindness are combined, what more is wanted to give us the idea of God's help? So, Purandhare was made firmer in his faith and deeper in his love of Sai Baba by this occurrence and this was the only one. At every step he had full faith in Baba's omniscience and omnipotence and he found that his faith was fully justified by the subsequent events. Baba knew exactly when Purandhare should start, when he should stay at a place like Nasik, a holy place of pilgrimage, which his mother wanted to visit, and how long he should stay there. When Purandhare acted upon Baba's directions, it seemed to several that he was running foolish risks, but everything that Baba said occurred exactly as he said it would. he was told to stay one day at Nasik and to proceed on the next day. When he went there, he found that cholera was attacking some members of his family, such as his brother, and he was advised to get away. But he remembered that Baba had said that he must stay one day at Nasik. So he did stay. on the next day with ill-health in the family, he found that he was perfectly safe in the following Baba's directions to the very letter. This confirms a man in the extent of reverence and faith that he has in Baba. Reverence and faith combined with thankfulness for the resulting good, form an excellent basis for the development of love. in

LIFE OF SAI BABA

this way, his love for Baba got more and more deep-rooted and his faith, being justified, was the means for so many others catching on to that faith. Baba's kindness towards him was remarkable even from the beginning. Why should Baba care so much for this petty clerk who went to Shirdi for the first time? That is the question, which any one would ask. And one would like to know the root of that love. The root of love is not always traceable, but in this particular case we have Baba's own statement to help us. When Purandhare's mother told Baba to look after him, Baba's reply was, "I have known him for generations. I have guarded him from his infancy in front and behind. I will not eat even a bit of food without him". That is, as much as to say that Baba remembered the love relations between Purandhare and himself in former lives.

Purvabhysena Tenaiva Hriyate hyavasopisab
Tatra tam buddhi samyogam Labhate Pourvadehikam

These two are extracts from the Bhagavat Gita constantly quoted to show that purva vasanas, that is, traits in the soul existing in previous births follow one in subsequent births also. In addition to the Bhagavat Gita chapter 16, Verse 10, Baba consciously expressed that love that existed between the two, but Purandhare felt the same love unconsciously and was being pulled to Baba. Baba added no doubt that he draws his devotee's even from thousands of miles away and his drawing is like a boy drawing a bird to whose foot one end of a string is attached while the other is held by him. The bird cannot choose but go to the boy when the boy pulls it. Baba's statement was that he similarly pulled persons who had former contact with him which is Rinanubhandha and Purandhare was expressly one of those greatly attached to him in a former life. that may explain how he run so many risks like taking a sick child to Shirdi from Bombay for the purpose of seeing Baba, with no ostensible gain to explain the risk taken.

having hinted at the origin of the love link between Baba and Purandhare we may proceed to sketch out how this seed of love in the latest janma manifested itself. Purandhare was always giving vent to every emotional feeling strongly. if he felt angry, he would at once burst out in a fit of anger and quarrel. if he felt love, h would be equally ready to express it. Baba had to warn him against his quick temper and thus improve him in respect of this first concern. Baba used his emotional nature for developing love. Conferring of benefits is the surest means of the development of love. Baba conferred benefits in a very peculiar, and often in a very mysterious way. The manner of

LIFE OF SAI BABA

benefits being conferred as well as the nature of the benefit being conferred, tended to equally develop the mysterious elements of love.

Purandhare was a poor clerk as we have already stated, and had no worldly financial ambitions. He was living as a tenant in some house and had to face a lot of trouble in consequence. Now we will take the first remarkable benefit Baba conferred on him. When we love a child we love to adorn it's body with fine clothes and ornaments etc., When Baba, with His wonderful powers loved Purandhare, He could not endure the idea of this good fellow being ill-treated by all those whom he had to contact in occupying a rented house. So, the first thing that struck Baba was that He should make this poor clerk own a bungalow of his own. The idea that a clerk on Rs. 35 monthly salary could purchase a plot of land and build a bungalow on it was so queer that Purandhare could not think of it. Yet, very early in his contact with Baba, Baba told him definitely, 'Bhav, you had better buy a plot of land and build a bungalow on it'. Purandhare naturally thought it was beyond practical politics, and he could not act upon it. Baba was impatient. When Purandhare went to Him again and again without building the house.

Baba got provoked and even threw stones at him. Baba told others, for instance, Bade Baba, to go and tell this R.B. Purandhare, whom He called 'Ram Bhav', 'Ask that man whether he thinks me to be a man or a beast? Why does he not act on my words?' When Bade Baba came and asked Purandhare and found out what Baba's advice was, he also thought that it was not a question of practical politics for this Rs.35 clerk to buy land and build a bungalow on it. Similarly, Baba complained to Nana Chandorkar and Kaka Dixit about this intransigent devotee and told Nana to ask that fellow whether he thought that Baba was a man or a beast. When Nana Chandorkar went to Purandhare and asked him what Baba referred to, Purandhare frankly told him the situation. Then Nana went back at once to Baba's feet and said, 'This matter is beyond his means; if you so desire, we will build a house for him and give it to him'. Baba's reply was most remarkable, he said, 'I do not want anybody else to pay for it'. There is a lot of money of this Ram Bhav in My Sirkar and I alone will enable him to build. Nana could not understand how this Sirkar was going to work, and there the matter seemed to end. But Baba kept on digging into Purandhare.

At last it occurred to Purandhare that he might get at least a site. There were plenty of sites available at Bandra. A site in a place far away from popular quarters would be fairly cheap. Anyhow even that price was unavailable. At once that friend instead of saying anything

LIFE OF SAI BABA

else came and placed the money before him so that he could at once take the plot. Purandhare asked whether he should execute a document for the money and what interest he should pay. That friend declined to have any document or any terms. He simply said, 'Go on; build, Let every other thing wait'. Purandhare then bought the land and secured the title deed for the land. So he had taken one step in the direction in which Baba wanted him to move. But it is one thing to have a site and a totally different thing to have a bungalow built on it. Those who have built bungalows know to their cost that actual building far exceeds the original estimate. Purandhare was faced with further difficulties. He did not build. But when he went up to Baba without building it, Baba got angry with him and found fault with him for everything and for nothing. The conduct of Baba seemed to be to others most unaccountable.

For instance, on the Ram Navami celebration of Baba's day, Purandhare and a friend of his were commissioned to regulate the huge crowds that were flowing towards Baba to take darshan. Purandhare did his best to reduce the force on the confluence towards Baba. But Baba got angry and said, 'You fellow, you did not give Me peace whether I am in Mosque or elsewhere. You allow these people to rush at Me and give Me no peace'. This was obviously an unreasonable remark, for Purandhare had done his very best. The crowds in those days were so huge that procession of the darshan seekers would extend for many furlongs from the mosque where Baba sat. It is not possible for one or two fellows to control such a huge crowd; Still Baba got angry and severely threatened him with punishment of all sorts. Baba said that He would even bury him in the Mosque at His own feet with His own hands. The way in which Purandhare put up with this apparently unreasonable treatment is evidence of the strong love that was growing in His heart.

Love endureth all things. Love does not blame. Love does not find fault. So he quietly endured without offering a word of explanation for all this treatment. Then Baba treated him in a different way. Having exhausted the threats and abuses, Baba inflicted on him, by His own mysterious means, a severe neuralgic headache, which Purandhare went on enduring, nights and days. Once Bade Baba came and asked Baba to give Purandhare some palliative, Baba simply said, 'That fellow would not listen to me'. Then Bade Baba said, 'He is working heart and soul in your service. So kindly give him some treatment'. No treatment given to Purandhare would give him relief. It was not Baba's idea to give him relief till he finished his building. So all the time he stayed at Shirdi, he suffered intense pain. He was asked to go back his

LIFE OF SAI BABA

home and carry on his work. Purandhare went home fully convinced that this headache inflicted by Baba would only cease, as Baba said, after he built the house. How is he to get the money?

It occurred to him that the office lent to the establishment some sums for building purposes for building a tenement. So he applied and got from his office a sum of Rs. 500 and got ready some materials like bricks, etc., for building the bungalow. He was too unwell to look to the building. So his brother went up and looked after the building work. Quick building is jerry building and is bound to have serious defects. The wada or bungalow that was put up in the course of a month by Purandhare's brother was built so hastily that in a short time, in a year or so, there were cracks on the walls. It must be remembered that the building was built on agricultural land without any settu or hard foundation. Evidently the hasty foundations laid for this wada were insufficient to keep the walls together and in perpendicular position. So cracks developed. Anyhow it was built rapidly in a month, and Purandhare with his orthodox ideas wanted to do Vastupuja himself on the building before occupying it. So he went up and did Vastupuja and strangely enough, only after he went and occupies this bungalow, his neuralgic headache ceased.

Here is a strange instance of Baba's Love forcing a man to get a bungalow when he could hardly afford it. There were other defects besides this jerry building. The site was a lonely site in the midst of a waste. There were no neighboring houses to give one safety of company. Purandhare was simply afraid of that, with young wife and child at home, things were not safe, especially when he went away to his office. Baba told him however, 'Don't you be afraid. I am there guarding your wife all the time'. This was found to be true, because, though Baba's form was not always seen, no danger befell this family living a solitary life in the midst of a waste.

Now let us examine this method of exhibiting love. When we have a person, we want to confer benefits. Baba loved Purandhare and was conferring a bungalow on him. But in what way? By first violent abuse, threats and finally by inflicting prolonged pain, which was hard to endure. anyone else other than Purandhare would have doubted whether the game was worth the candle, whether it was worthwhile getting a bungalow after enduring all this trouble and taking the burden of loans which he could only repay very slowly on account of his very low pay. yet Purandhare, being a sincere enthusiastic lover, never questioned Baba's kindness or omniscience or guardianship of himself and family and never complained to anybody. When he was in

LIFE OF SAI BABA

the worst pangs of head ache, he simply wrote to Radhakrishna Ayi, "Tell mother Baba that I am unable to endure this pain and that he must kill me and take me to his feet or cure me"" But what could poor Ayi do? Baba was adamant and had his own way and did succeed in making a petty clerk own a bungalow and that too in double quick time. This is one good instance of Baba's forcing benefit on those whom he loved and loves. Baba's conferring of benefit could be found in every direction.

This Purandhare had a lot of financial difficulties and official troubles. He knew so little of how to provide for every contingency. Baba anticipated everything and gave him mysterious warnings in dreams and visions, and enabled him to go through all ordeals without breaking under them. We will take one example. When he went back from Shirdi to his house in Bombay, his wife contracted cholera, and there were so many motions so as to thoroughly exhaust her. the doctor who came and examined her found the pulse feeble and the breath very slow. So he gave up hope and went away. But Purandhare was not the man to give up hope and faith. He knew his God was the Shirdi Sai and with the fullest faith, he went about and found Baba suddenly standing in front of the Maruti temple near his house. Baba told him. 'Don't be afraid; give her udhi and tirtam' and disappeared. Purandhare acted boldly on that advice. He had udhi with him, took up some tirtham and mixed up the two, administered that cold water to the patient. Some others got frightened and said that he should not do this as it would aggravate the disease. But Purandhare's faith in Baba was unshakable and he did give this mixture. With what result? In an hour's time, the sick lady had drunk up all the water and after a little time her breath began to revive strongly. Her body heat began to revive also. Her facial expression improved very much. When the doctor came thereafter, he said that he noticed a very remarkable change for the better and that there was much hope of the patient's recovery. He asked what was the medicine given to her. Purandhare's reply was 'Nothing but udhi and tirtham'.

Benefits conferred on Purandhare were innumerable and they varied in their character. All of them were founded upon Baba's wonderful, unseen guardianship and the exercise of superhuman powers of guarding his dear ward or devotee from all trouble. We should just give an instance of some of these other benefits and stop.

Purandhare was anxious always to be with his object of love. That is the characteristic of love. So, he tried to go to Shirdi as often as possible. Baba objected to that and told him that he need not go to

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Shirdi so often. Baba told him to work in company with H. S. Dixit, and the two generally went together. Dixit was at the top of the ladder, rich, influential, famous, highly learned and commanding respect from every one. Purandhare was the exact opposite of all this and yet Purandhare in his anxiety, would try to go along with Dixit every time the latter went. This of course exposed him to some risks on some occasions. Baba detained him at Shirdi far beyond the extent of his leave. On one such occasion, the Foreman of his office asked him for an explanation and threatened him. Purandhare's defiant reply was, 'Here is my resignation. Take it'. Purandhare was so sensitive. His superior Mr. Wilson knew all about his relations with Baba and asked him where he was overstaying his leave. Purandhare's reply was, 'With Baba'. Wilson knew at once that without Baba's permission neither Purandhare nor anybody else should leave Shirdi and so he tore up his resignation and told the Foreman that Purandhare was not his subordinate, much to the chagrin of that Foreman.

On one occasion, Purandhare was anxious to run to Shirdi. But during the night Baba appeared in a dream and told him, 'Beware, if you come I will hit you. Do not come. Why should you come so often? I am not away from you. I am with you. Do not play the fools.' He was wondering why Baba forbids his visit. But he obeyed the order. The next morning there was a strike among the labourers in his mill, and he discovered that Baba was right for, had he gone away, the superior officials would think that Purandhare was at the bottom of the strike and had got away to hide the fact. But as he remained at the station, he was not suspected and he was obviously innocent of any sympathy with the strikers. Instances of this sort in which Baba conveyed advice and warning are too numerous to be fully described. They all tended to confirm Purandhare's idea that his living God was this Shirdi Baba and he was perfectly safe in following his advice and directions.

A description of any two human beings who are more or less the same level is difficult enough but if of the two beings, one is a common place, ordinary, man-in-the-street and the other is a high, spiritual, moral and imaginative soul, the description of relations becomes extremely difficult. We can only describe what we understand. Sai Baba's nature was so peculiar, so weird, that any attempt to grasp his nature is bound to be hopeless. Sri Diwakar in his Foreword to Kaparde's diary says, 'From what is known of Sai Baba, he was a phenomenon. Many had very close contacts with him', but none could know him, much less explain him. More than a dozen years ago, when this author was studying Baba – a Satpurusha, one Dr. Jal came and told him, 'What? You are trying to understand a Satpurusha. That is

LIFE OF SAI BABA

impossible. Give it up?' There is certain amount of truth in these declarations, but we can never deal with any subject unless we know something of it, however infinitesimal and insignificant a part it may be. If we do not have even a rough idea of it, how can we talk of it or write of it? So, though Baba could be known, he is understood in a vague and very partial way, and that is part of the necessity of the case. This statement applies also to other great souls like Jesus Christ, Tennyson says of him,

Thou seemest human and divine,
The Highest Holiest Manhood Thou;
Our wills are ours we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine.

According to Emerson, humanity and divinity run into each other and can never be separated. But in point of practice they are far apart, poles apart and attempts to deal with them on the same level proves to be a wretched failure. All the same we have started the task of describing the love between an ordinary human being like Purandhare and a divine being like Sai Baba. So we must proceed further on with this task of trying at least to present some of the features of this love.

The features of love between ordinary human beings are fairly well-known. We find these features repeated in the inter-relation between a divine or semi-divine person and an ordinary human person. One of the best instances of love or friendship indistinguishable from the love described in English poetry is the instance of Tennyson's love of Arthur Hadlaw, which is the subject of the poem 'In Memorium'. There are some hints given. One interesting hint is that the two natures grow more and more alike and almost blend into one. The two friends or lovers nature grow more and more alike and blend into one. One very interesting passage is how the thoughts of both the friends ran simultaneously into the same groove or the same point. Says Tennyson,

When each by turn was guide to each
And fancy light from fancy caught,
And thought leapt forth to wed with thought,
Ere thought itself could with speech.

This is quite striking and this has been noticed as a feature of the relation of ordinary souls even with Mahatmas. When this author was living at Tiruvannamalai, he and Yogi Ramayya would come down from the hill to meet Ramana Maharishi in his ashram and not infrequently

LIFE OF SAI BABA

the thought that was stirring their mind would be found to be part of the talk at the Ashram. When Maharishi was asked for an explanation about it he simply said, "There are some peculiar psychological laws about the working of the human spirit. They may account for it. Instances of thought leaping forth to wed with thought are found in Purandhare's account of his own experiences with Baba. In about 1915, Sai Baba was seriously ill. he could not move about without being supported. He was suffering from severe exhaustion and his body underwent a great deal of suffering. Strangely enough, at that time, Purandhare came to the railway station thinking that he would start and go with his wife and mother to their village. But when he came to the station, his mind turned. he asked them to go to their place, and he himself wanted definitely to go to Shirdi, much to the chagrin of those ladies. Purandhare left Shirdi despite their protests, and what did he see there when he went to Shirdi? He found that Baba was in severe physical pain and apparently in serious danger. Purandhare says, 'At that time in 1916, Baba and Radhakrishna Ayi were both ill. After I reached Kopergaon the tongawalla, Hassan carried the news to me. I asked him to take me straightway to Shirdi and I reached the place at about 8.45 or 9 a.m. I could hear the heavy breathing of Shree as I approached his residence. I went near him and cried. All the visitors were seated. When I ascended the steps looking up to him, he said, "Bhav! Have you come? I feel exhausted. Do not leave me now. I have been expecting you for the last three or four days. I told Kaka also. Go and stay with Radhakrishna Ayi. Do not leave the place." I went there but she too was ill. Sree at that time had grown very weak having had no food. But otherwise his daily routine had not changed in any way. he had to walk supported by two or three persons. his bhiksha was being conducted as usual. one day when he was going to Lendi, I offered to carry him. I could not help weeping then. Sree told me not to cry for. "In two or four days, I will be well. Allamia had out me to pain, which I must endure. Do not cry on that account. Why should you? For two days we have to face good or bad events. We ought not to fear."

Here we see how the unity of spirit between Purandhare and Sai Baba plays. Firstly, when Baba thought that Purandhare should be sent for Shirdi and asked Kaka to write to him. Purandhare had already had the thought in his mind. Baba wanted him near on account of his health. but the love had worked in Purandhare's mind and inaccountably he wanted to start for Shirdi without knowing what was the particular necessity for his going. Here is thought leaping forth to wed with thought, 'ere thought itself could wed with speech. Again the unity of spirit between two intimate companions , friends or lovers, is seen in

LIFE OF SAI BABA

this. Baba on account of weakness and asthmatic trouble was breathing hard and undergoing pain. his weakness prevented him from walking erect and unsupported as usual, and Purandhare looking at both these facts cried and cried for he could not bear to see Baba in pain. This is a very high degree of love, and Baba had to reason with him and console him and make him desist from weeping.

Love does not merely show itself in strong fellow-feeling, but manifests itself by the sacrifices made. Purandhare was prepared to make any sacrifice and be with Baba to bask in his presence and he would put up with any treatment, however painful, from Baba which others would rebel against. On one occasion, when he took creepers to make alley on both sides of Baba's walk from his Masjid, in the chavadi, and Lendi, he got the creepers with great trouble. They were precious creepers, they were. But Baba did not care a brass button for alloys and flowers and all that. So when he took the creepers, Baba refused to give him permission to plant them. For three days the creepers withered not being cared for, Purandhare's heart was aching like anything. His sorrow at the idea of losing this enterprise of planting an alley and his sorrow at the withering or the death of the creepers was intense. Baba inspite of his vairagya and indifference to alleys and planting creepers could not be indifferent to the pain of this loving Purandhare. So, he told him finally not to have any fears and promised that even if the creepers were withering, he would make them thrive again with his wonderful mystic powers and finally granted permission after three days of withering. Strangely enough, the creepers were planted and inspite of the loss of time, the plants grew up.

Another very interesting manifestation of love is the taking of liberties. In the case of Purandhare, the taking of liberties was in the following case. Tatyapaatil's taking liberties is mentioned in a different place in H. S. Dixit's diary in a letter from Narke. But here we are dealing with Purandhare. Purandhare and his friends had, with great enthusiasm and trouble, secured for Baba's picture a silver palanquin with silver ornament tacked on to the top of the same, but, when these were brought by the loving and enthusiastic devotees, Baba, who hated all pomp and pageantry and rated them at their proper worth, refused to allow the palanquin to be brought into his mosque as Baba himself would not sit in a palki. He said, 'Let it remain outside, and so the whole night the palki remained outside without any watchman. During the night some thieves came and made away some of the silver horses. In the morning the much distraught devotees ran to Baba and complained about the theft. Baba simply said, 'Why did the thieves not

LIFE OF SAI BABA

take away the whole palanquin?' Baba had so much contempt for wealth. But the devotees would not give up their own notions as to the need for wealth and pomp to set off Sai Baba as a real Maharaja, a Prince with all sorts of appurtenance like silver palanquin. So, Radhakrishna Ayi and Purandhare resolved that the palanquin should be provided with a garage and they determined that the place to the next to the mosque on one side should be turned into a garage to safely lock up the palanquin. They could put up pillars on one side of that space and lean rafters thereon, but to make the rafters rest on the other side they had to put in support which should be inserted into the wall of the mosque to support the roof. No one would dare to do it, because it involved digging into the walls of the mosque, that is, boring holes, about four or five of them. It is a downright desecration to bore holes in a wall of a mosque or a garbagraham, which has only three walls and no Hindu would think of defiling a garbagraham by such an unholy act. No orthodox Muslim would put up with the idea of boring holes in mosque wall merely to support the adjoining garage rafters. But Purandhare had no alternative. He got up boldly and dug holes in the wall and inserted the pieces of wood. By that time Baba, who had gone out, returned and he was furious. He said, 'Purandhare. You want to break my mosque wall?' Purandhare bowed to him and explained that the wall would be safe that only three of four pieces of wood would be inserted. But Baba refused permission. Here comes the liberty taken by the spirit of love. Purandhare determined to continue his work for honouring Baba with a silver palanquin and a garage, and did not mind his orders. Baba was cursing and swearing, all to no purpose, Purandhare continued his work unmindful of his meal or that he was detaining his mother and wife from having their meal by reason of his absence. But Baba's heart was pained. He could not endure to see Purandhare toil away without caring for his food and without caring for his mother and wife who were starving. Baba at last gave in. His love overcomes his orthodox objections as regards desecrating the wall. He told the people that this rascal of a Purandhare was making himself and others suffer by keeping away from food and not listening to his words. Finally Baba said, "Purandhare, go and eat" But Purandhare would not. he said, "Baba, If I go away, you will undo all my work.' Then Baba had to promise that he would not undo the work done. It is only after that Purandhare got down and went to his quarters for a meal. Then Baba said, referring Purandhare, 'What is to be done? If a child passes motions on our thigh, do we kill the child or cut off the thigh? We have simply to put up with it.' This is a very apt description of the relation between Purandhare and Baba. Purandhare was the petted child who would take liberties of Baba and Baba did forgive his tortuous digging into

LIFE OF SAI BABA

the mosque wall for the sake of providing a wretched palanquin with a garage. The incident was insignificant. But it brings out the power of the love existing between Baba and Purandhare by showing the liberties the devotee takes and the extend of Baba's forgiveness, due to the strength of his love.

We may proceed from Purandhare's instance to deal with other instances of Baba's sacrifice. Sacrifice is the test of love. Purandhare would sacrifice anything to get and be with Baba. He would run official risks to be with Baba even without leave, for the risk of earthly good was nothing to him when compared with joyful company of Baba. Next let us take the sacrifice made by Baba. Baba's sacrifices are indescribable. Baba had immense powers. He knew everything everywhere. He knew what troubles were being undergone by devotees and what dangers awaited them in every place. It is no doubt a grand feat for one to be able to know what takes place with so many devotees at the same time. But to proceed next to guard each devotee and help each devotee at each place is a task that stuns the human mind. No human being can possibly be watching one at Poona one at Bombay, one at Bandra and hundreds of others in various places and providing the safety needed for them all. What was the safety granted by Baba? He assured people that he would even save them from death. He would save them from Government prosecution. He would save them from the danger of missing their trains and hardships on the way. For all these purposes, he would watch numerous devotees and various people and provide for their safety. To take one small instance, Abdul Rangari's carriage broke down on the road to railway station far away from Shirdi in the middle of the night, and Rangari, his wife and children were on the road absolutely helpless. But was he really helpless? Baba's superhuman eye and superhuman love were upon him. Baba saw the whole thing from his Shirdi residence with his own wonderful powers. He sent a jutkawalla on that road asking him to cry out, Thanawalla, Thanawalla, for a Thanawalla's cart had broken down and left him stranded on the road helpless at midnight. So, a tongawalla came shouting Thanawalla, Thanawalla, to the place where Rangari was, and told him of Baba's instruction. Rangari was wonder-struck at the extend of Baba's knowledge and kindness. So, he got into the cart sent so mysteriously and kindly by Baba, and went back to Baba and found Baba waiting for him.

Baba would watch people in far away places like Poona and Bombay. Nana Chandorkar, a fat stout gentleman, and Lele Sastri, his companion, were in a *tonga* coming from Poona, and on the road, the horse reared and upset the carriage. Both the corpulent men were

LIFE OF SAI BABA

tossed down. Baba at that time was in his mosque and he, putting his hands in front of his mouth, make a *sankham* sound, that is, a dolorous warning about the approach of death. He said, 'Nana is about to die. But will I let him die?' Then what happened was that Baba, by the use of his mysterious powers, saved both the corpulent gentlemen from any injury to life and limb. They picked themselves on the road, and they came later on to Baba to learn that Baba at that time when death and danger faced them had known that fact and averted both death and danger. The knowledge is wonderful. the exercise of power is wonderful. But yet more wonderful is to save his devotees

As Baba said, his nights were not intended for sleep. On the other hand with his divine eye of supervision, he was keeping watch over all his bhaktas in all their places and averting danger from them. Look at this vast unimaginable task of one person trying to save hundreds in hundred different places. The task is simply unimaginable. No human being could ever succeed in it. It is the divine Baba that could do it and that did it. His divine power enabled him to do it and his divine kindness made him forego sleep and all comforts for that purpose. the sacrifice of physiological well-being by giving up sleep night after night, was very serious, but Baba willingly consented to do it. Baba's body was human, though his soul was divine. Baba had to undergo all the physiological evils of protracted loss of sleep and loss of comforts. He told G. S. Khaparde, on the occasion of his first visit in 5-12-1910.

We reached Shirdi about 4 p.m. We put up in the Wada built for the convenience of the people by R. B. Sathe. Madhavrao Despande was very obliging and helped us and treated us like guests. There are in the Wada, Tatyasaheb Nulkar with his family. Bapusahib Jog, and Babasahib Sahasrabuddhe. We all went to see Sayin Maharaj soon after our arrival. he was in the Masjid. after salutation I and my son offered the fruits brought by us and gave some money at his request. the Sayin Saheb then said, that he used to eat only barely cake and take little water. he showed his food and pointed to a small sore, saying it was the string worm. That it had been extracted but the string had snapped inside and then it had reappeared again. he said he heard that it would not be well with him till he went to his native town. he said he kept it in view, but that was all. He cared more for his people than for his own life. He said he found no rest as people troubled him. It could not be helped. Then he told us to withdraw, which we did. Towards evening he passed by the Wada, and we went and saluted him. I and Madhavrao Despande went together. After we saluted, he said, 'Go to the Wada and sit quiet.' So, I and Madhavrao returned. We all sat talking. They have many miracles to relate.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Baba really cared more for the welfare of his children than for the safety of his body. Baba however was both human and divine. His body underwent serious damage by reason of the sacrifices he made. Especially in a rude village where people had little imagination and less civilization, his comforts were cut down mercilessly. To make up for the loss of a whole night's sleep, he had the yogic power to recoup his energies by spending one hour in sleep after the noon-meal. But was he allowed to have that rest? Here is an instance.

Syamkarna, a horse, was presented to Baba's Sansthan, for the sansthan requires a horse. A rustic was sent to the village to fetch the horse. He returned and demanded his wages from Radhakrishna Ayi who referred him to Shama. Shama in turn said, 'Go and ask Baba', The rude idiot ran up to the mosque at the time when Baba was taking his rest after the noon meal and bawled out loudly saying, 'Give me my wages for bringing the horse'. Here comes the human element. Baba was losing the very little rest that he got by this rustic's idiocy. He got angry, took up a brickbat and flung it at the man. The stroke hit the man on the head and fetched blood. The man bawled out that he was being killed for asking his wages. There were policemen in the village of Shirdi and they would be only too ready to seize an opportunity to launch a complaint against Baba and screw out as much money as possible from him. H.S. Dixit was on the spot and scented the danger. He sent for the rustic and told him the absurd mistake he had committed in disturbing Baba's sleep and give him Rs. 200 wherewith he could buy a cart and a horse and become a carriage driver in stead of being a miserable cooly that he was then. The man jumped at the offer and the danger of prosecution was averted. We see here the human element. Baba himself noted that element his *gosttis*. referring to his human system he said, there are two parts of it. One is spirit and the other is flesh. The latter he called *matti*, which means clay. He said sometimes *matti* was up and anger broke out. This is exactly what happened in the above case. The human element. The human element could not be banished, and so Baba got angry and flung a brickbat. Luckily all is well that ends well, and this incident, far from damaging the man gave him a good fortune, namely, made him a cart driver instead of continuing his life as a cooly. But the point here is that Baba had his human side. Therefore, the extent of sacrifice he made on human side for pleasing and helping his devotees was so grand that the sacrifice made by Purandhare and others could never be compared to the infinite sacrifices made by Baba.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

There is above all another and a higher sacrifice which people do not know of – the sacrifice of a thorough Jnani in taking on the human constitution and carrying on work in the phenomenal world and entirely giving up the idea of resting in pure Atman without any care or sorrow, that is, securing Brahma Nishta or Santi. This is a very great sacrifice. No other sacrifice equals it. But people do not see it in the light of sacrifice. Baba on the other hand derived pleasure out of bonds of love. He had a mission to fulfill and therefore he took birth to help devotee after devotee in every matter, temporal and spiritual. This involves a definite resignation of all hopes of Shanti, Shanti, Shanti, and a definite signing of oneself to samsaric life. Nana Chandorkar told Baba that he wanted to be free from Samsara. But Baba retorted that it was an impossible feat and said, "So long as there is the body, there are the prarabdha and samsara with it. Baba added that he himself could not escape samsara. Look at the above description of samsara of Baba. When we are weighed down with the care of providing for one family of a handful of people, Baba's samsara or family consisted and consists of several thousands. Therefore, one can understand the extent and unimaginable magnitude of the sacrifice undergone by Baba. No doubt there is another side to the shield. Batruhari says, in describing Kala, Kala has put Mahavishnu into the enormous trouble of taking ten Avatars.

Vishnu Ena Dasavatara Gahane
Schitto Mahan Sankate

this means, You Kala, by whom Mahavishnu himself was thrown into the tortures of ten births. This is no doubt poetic flair. There is another and better view to be taken about Avatars. For an Avatar to take birth to carry out a mission, not as a result of one's unavoidable purva karma, but out of one's own grace, need not be considered a matter of sorrow at all. It is Iswara that is taking birth, and the Vedas say
Purnam Adah Purnam Idam
Purnat Purnam Udhachyate
Purnascya Purnamadaya
Purnameva Avaschishyate.

this means, The Infinite or Perfect is this the original. And the Infinite or Perfect is the manifestation. From the Perfect, Perfect is taken. In the result, Perfection can suffer no diminution. Iswara is perfect to his happiness and perfect in his power and qualities. So, when an Avatara is taken, still the Infinite, God remains Infinite enjoying Satchitananda. An Avadara is but a reflection or a part of the original God and would still maintain its Satchitananda or perfectly peaceful and blissful state.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

On the manifested side, troubles, tortures and Dasavatara are undergone. Baba was both human and divine and is treated as an Avatar by very large numbers. Baba maintained his Satchidananda in spite of the troubles of his physical body. Once he said, My Mourshad, Guru has taken me away from this body. You can put the whole of this body on fire and I will enjoy the Ganath, fun. That is, his conquest of the I-am-the-body idea was so perfect that like martyrs, whose bodies were burnt, he could still be in joy when the body was perishing. Therefore the sacrifices, great as they appear on Baba's part, might not from his point of view he considered a serious pain.

SRI SANTARAM BALWANT NACHNE, DAHANUKAR

We may give a short account of the contact of S. B. Nachne with Baba and his experiences as it is typical of Baba's complete protection given to a person of a very ordinary nature who had no high religious aim or achievement. This devotee gave out his experiences while he was yet in harness as a Taluk office Head Clerk in September 1936. He had originally in 1923, related part of his experience in Sai Lila Masik.

His contact with Baba started in 1909. His elder brother was then undergoing an operation very near in his throat in a hospital at Bombay. At Dahanu, Santaram Nachne and his family were full of anxiety about the result of the operation. A *sadhu* approached their house, and from outside asked, 'Will you give me a crumb or two of *roti*?' Then he was invited inside, and a regular course of dished was served. But in doing so, Santaram's sister-in-law deliberately omitted to give him *Bendi baji* lady's finger curry, thinking that it was too poor a stuff to serve a saintly guest. The *sadhu* himself said, 'I want Bendi baji', and then it was served to him. He then blessed them all, and said that the operation in the Bombay hospital was safely performed and that there was no danger. Later in the day, Santaram's friend, Mr. H.M. Pasne, told him, 'I hope the operation is safe by Sai Baba's grace'. That was the first time that Santaram heard of Baba's name. In the evening after that, Santaram's father returned from Bombay with the news that the operation was really success and that a *sadhu*, after

LIFE OF SAI BABA

the operation had been performed, appeared in the hospital, came near the patient, passed his hands over the operated part, and said, 'All will go on well'. The operation was quite successful, and his brother had recovered completely.

Later in that year his father attended Das Ganu's kirtan wherein Das Ganu gave a full account of Sai Baba, and described him as the Datta Avatara having wonderful powers and wonderful kindness. He also brought the picture of Sai Baba home, and with it Baba's puja began in the house.

In 1912, Santaram first visited Shirdi. Then he had appeared for a departmental examination, a revenue test and went to Shirdi with two friends. At the Kopergaon railway station, the station master heard of their proposed visit to Baba, and began to abuse Baba saying that undue honour was being given to a mere hypnotist, who was guiling people like so many wandering jugglers and thaumaturgists. This made the impressionable Santaram very unhappy. He was beginning to have his doubts about Baba. Anyhow he reached Shirdi. The first sight that he caught of Sai Baba was walking from Lendi to Mosque. On the way Santaram and his friends met Baba. Baba looked straight at Santaram, and said, 'What? Have you come away without taking leave from the Mamlatdar?' The reply was 'yes'. Baba said, 'Don't do so hereafter'. At once, the object of these remarks was evident. Baba revealed his Antarjnana of Santaram being a Mamlatdar's clerk and that he had come without permission and showed a motherly kindness towards his devotee who was wavering. The Antarjnana and the kindness showed the worthlessness of the Station Master's remarks. Evidently it was for that purpose that Baba had addresses those words to him. This was only the beginning of a series of similar experiences during his three days of stay at Shirdi. At the end of three days, Santaram was perfectly assured and confident that Baba was the Datta Avatara, and not a juggler or thaumaturgist. Baba took udhi from Santaram's hand and applied it to his forehead. This was a mark of favour.

One day Santaram had gone very early for the arati in the Masjid, without taking his meal as it was Ekadasi day. Baba was no respecter of mere forms. Baba asked Santaram, 'Have you had your meal?' He said, 'No, because it is Ekadasi to-day'. Baba said, 'Never mind, You go and eat.' His two friends were very orthodox, and, therefore, Baba did not ask them to take their food. Baba said, 'They are mad. You better go and eat.' Then Santaram went to the dining place at his Wada. The man in the Wada began grumble that on an Ekadasi day, and that too

LIFE OF SAI BABA

before arati was over, Santaram should ask for food. So Santaram quietly returned to Baba. Again Baba asked, 'Meals over?' Santaram said, 'No, Baba. I will take the meal after the arati.' Baba said, 'Go, arati will wait, and it will begin only after your meal is over'. Santaram went and told the man in the Wada what Baba had said. So, he had to be given the meal. This is very good proof of Baba's affection towards Santaram. Then, meals over, Santaram went back to Mosque for the arati. Maushi had brought bidas, which is rolled up betal and nut, and Baba took some and asks him to chew. On Ekadasi days, people do not chew betal. But as Baba asked him to chew, Santaram had to chew. When the arati was over, Baba asked dakshina and took four rupees from Santaram and sixteen from Vaidya. From his friend Date, Baba did not ask for any dakshina. Date had no thought of giving any dakshina to Baba. In fact Date had very little reverence for Baba and Baba distinctively read each man's heart.

During these three days, when H.S. Dixit, Jog and Dabolkar were present, Baba spoke, pointing to Santaram, and said, 'I went to this man's house for a meal, but he would not give me Bendi baji'. At once Santaram remembered the sadhu who came to him three years ago in 1909, and was wonderstruck, for the sadhu who was then in his house looked different from Sai Baba at the Mosque. But from Baba's remarks, Santaram understood that it was really Baba who came in that form to help the family and reassure them of the safety of the operation in the Bombay hospital. Santaram asked Baba what result of his departmental examination would be. Baba said, Allah Malik Hai and placed his palm on Santaram's head. Santaram passed the examination.

On the third day, Baba was in tantrums. He was in a tearing rage at the Mosque. Why was he angry, and with whom, nobody could make out. But Baba was jumping about the floor of the Mosque. His eyes were red. For 15 minutes, no one got into the Mosque. Every one had fled. Santaram and others all doubted whether Baba was mad after all. At last Baba cooled down, and then Santaram and his friends begged him for leave to go away. He gave them leave with udhi. Baba at that time gave another blessing to Santaram. Santaram badly wanted a transfer from mofussal Dahanu to metropolis Bombay. Baba of his own accord said, 'Come to Bombay for service'. This was either prophecy or control, and took six years for its fulfillment. In 1918, Santaram was transferred to Bandra, a suburban district of Bombay.

Santaram who had left the station without the Mamlatdar's permission was noticed by the Mamlatdar B. V. Dev. He merely gave him a

LIFE OF SAI BABA

warning and no punishment. After this, Santaram repeated his visits to Shirdi whenever he could. When he was leaving in 1913 to go to Shirdi, his friend H. M. Panse, met him and said that he had been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment, but was let out on bail and that he was going to appeal. He wanted Santaram to tell Baba, 'Panse is in trouble and says he is innocent, and wants Baba's help.' When Santaram reached Shirdi, the early morning arati at the chavadi was going on. Baba was then in a very angry mood. Yet when he saw Santaram, and before any words had been spoken, he said, "Tell that fellow that he need not have any anxiety, and that he will be acquitted on appeal." And Panse was acquitted on appeal.

During S. B. Nachne's 1913 visit, Baba said, "We should not trust mad man", to a group in which Santaram was present. Santaram did not think that the remark applied to him. But next year, it was seen by Santaram to be a forewarning aimed to him. He was then posted at Dahanu as Treasury Master. He was at home doing Pooja to Baba's photo and other gods. Then one Radhakrishna Balwant Panse, whose mind was deranged, was standing at the door of the kitchen room, some distance away from the pooja room. He was thought to be harmless. But when the pooja went on, the man suddenly darted into the pooja room and grasped Santaram's neck with both his arms and tried to bite Santaram's throat saying, "I will drink your blood". Santaram was thunderstruck. But a thought entered him, evidently by Baba's Grace. Taking out the uddharani spoon he thrust it into the open mouth of the man and right into his throat. The mad man however bit Santaram's hand and fingers, which were in his mouth. The spoon got stuck up in the throat. Though the fingers were hurt, his life was saved. When, with the other hand Santaram tried to extricate the injured hand, his mother and others rushed and pulled off the mad man. Meanwhile, Santaram lost consciousness. After a time, he recovered. But the nails of the mad man had dug into the flesh of his neck and left injuries thereon. He had been nearly strangled to death, but luckily escaped death. The injuries on the fingers were healed. The same year when he went to Baba, Baba addressed Anna Chinchinikar, and pointing to Santaram, said, "Anna, if I had delayed one instant, this man would have indeed perished. The mad man seized with his hands even his throat. But I extricated him. What is to be done? Of I do not save my own children, who else will?" The words 'I extricated' in Baba's statement showed his extreme kindness and love towards devotees like Santaram who with full child-like confidence took refuge in him. Baba's statement, I extricated him, shows his command of all the siddhis. This extrication was first through Santaram's own idea of putting the uddharani into the mad man's

LIFE OF SAI BABA

mouth and next through the timely presence of his mother and others pulling off the mad man. So, here Baba's statement that he had acted through the Indriyas of Santaram and his mother. This is the siddhi called Prapti mentioned in the Srimad Bhagavata as one of God's Ashta Mahasiddhis. Baba had any number of siddhis at his disposal. He himself had said, 'God has agents everywhere, they have vast powers. I have very great powers'. He used these powers to save his children.

This danger had happened in 1914, even though he had given a hint in 1913, when he said, 'We should not trust mad men', a hint that could not be understood then by Santaram of Dahanu. So Baba was clearly watching from Shirdi, his devotees at Dahanu, hundreds of miles away, because they were his trusting children, the children of Dwarakamayee or Masudi Ayi, hour to hour, day to day and year after year. This power of having his eye of vigilant supervision on all those who love Him, has been declared by him. So Santaram was more than ever convinced that Baba was a divine personage with divine powers and divine kindness which he exercised on behalf of everyone who placed his entire faith in him even though such persons may number many thousands living in thousands of places.

In 1915, another instance occurred to Baba's grace and protection. Santaram with H.M Panse and others were travelling in a bullock cart at night in a dense jungle. This was at the Ranshet pass, notorious for its being infested with tigers. It was a dark night. Suddenly the bulls of the cart took fright and were moving backwards. Luckily, they were not dragging the cart sideways, as it was a hill pass, with a steep slope on one side of a narrow road. had the bulls dragged the cart that side, it would have been all over with them. Then Panse pointed with his hand to something and Santaram saw the gleaming eyes of a tiger couching on the road. Panse wished to save the cart from being pushed into the ravine, and so wanted to get down and place big stones or sticks as a brake to the wheels. So, he asked Santaram to hold the reins of the bulls. As he held them he roared, 'Hail Sai Baba! Run Sai Baba to our help'. The others also begin to shout and the tiger got frightened at the volume of sound and ran away by the side of their cart. So, it was faith in Baba and the courage that Baba gave Santaram that saved the situation.

In 1915, after this incident, Santaram started for Shirdi. At the railway station, one V S Samant gave Santaram a coconut and two annas to buy sugar candy to be presented to Baba. When Santaram went to the Shirdi Masjid, he gave Baba the coconut, but forgot all about the two annas or the sugar candy. He asked Baba leave to go back. Baba said,

LIFE OF SAI BABA

"yes, you may go via Chitale, But why keep back a poor Brahmin's two annas?.' Santaram had frequent experiences like this of Sai Baba's eye of supervision and antarnana of everything that happened to his bhaktas everywhere. When Santaram gave the two annas, Baba said, 'Whatever you undertake to do, do it thoroughly. Else do not undertake to do it'. This is a very valuable instruction applicable to everyone and to all departments of life.

Some of Baba's utterances were clearly prophetic, like the warning about the mad man. Another instance of prophecy was when Santaram with Shankar Rao Vaidya had gone to Shirdi, and Baba had asked them for Rs. 16 as Dakshina first. When they said, "We have no money." Baba asked them for Rs. 32. Again they said, "No money". Baba again asked them for Rs. 64. Then Nachne said. "We are poor people. We can't afford to pay such large sums.." Then Baba asked, "Then collect and give." This proved to be a prophecy. Sometime later (1916) Baba fell ill. A big sapta was performed for his restoration to health and subscriptions were raised for mass feeding. Then Sankar Rao and Nachne collected subscriptions at the request of Dabolkar, they found the total sum collected and sent up to be Rs.64/-.

In 1915, Santaram had a set of calamities in his family. His wife gave birth to children who died in infancy. Then his wife went alone with Shama to pray to Baba for long-lived children. Then as usual, she took a coconut with her. She gave the coconut to Baba and Baba threw that coconut back into her *padar*. Baba's eyes were brimming with tears as he gave away the coconut. He made Santaram sit at his feet and massage his legs. During that time, Baba passed his hands over Santaram's back in a token of his blessing and Santaram felt happy , and expressed his thanks for being saved from the murderous mad man. Baba said, Allah Malik Hai meaning, "That is all the order of Allah" Then Santaram embraced Baba and Baba embraced him, showing the intimate love Santaram bore to Baba and Baba bore to him.

Baba once saved Santaram from drowning in 1916. At night, he had to return his house across a creek. There was no ferry boat there. So, he took a canoe with a boy to paddle. just as he was in the middle of the Creek, Santaram, a rather bulky man, moved aside just a bit within the canoe; but that made a big difference and the canoe capsized. He was deep in the waters. At once he thought Baba. The boy was a good swimmer, and he pointed to a rope which was above the water connecting a buoy with a ship at a distance, and asked Santaram to

LIFE OF SAI BABA

hold on to that rope. At once Santaram caught it and held on to it. Then the boy halloed to the ship and thus got men rescue Santaram.

The reason for tears in Baba's eye when giving the coconut to Santaram's wife was not understood at that time. But in 1919, after Baba passed away, a son was born as promised by Baba at the time when the coconut was gifted. This child was called Kalu Ram. Kalu Ram lived just for eight years, and his mother lived for only 2 years after his birth. So, both the deaths were obviously seen by Baba at the time of his gift.

Baba's powers, included *Traikalika Bhuddhih*, Srimad Bhagavata refers to this *traikalika Jnana*. Baba's *Jnana* may even be termed *Rithambhara prajna*. This distinction between past, present and future exists only to us, who are all very limited in our power of seeing and knowing. To us the present includes very little of the future but to *Satpurushas* like Baba it includes the whole of the future. This boy Kalu Ram was a wonderful genius. At the age of 3, he was always in the habit of repeating Ram Hari Ram. It was then that his mother expired. This was said to be the effect of *Mula Nakshatram* in which the boy was born. This boy stunned the imagination of all their acquaintances. Hegde, a neighbour, said, "The boy's knowledge of Krishna Lilas seems to be so good that the boy himself should have certainly been one of he playmates of Krishna in the *Dwapara Yuga*".

The boy himself occasionally said, "Krishna used to tease me, I caught hold of Hari's legs and pinched them. I looked up and then Hari upset the curd pot over my face. Then the lady of the house turned up." Hegde used to read Hari Vijaya and on some days the boy would mention the story that would be read in Hari Vijaya later on in the day.

One day, the boy was seated motionless in a corner. His eyeballs were upturned. He had a cloth over his head as a cowl, and when Santaram asked him why he was covering his head, he laughed and said, "That is our usual course of *sadhana*". Everything was suggestive of a high proficiency of *Yoga* about him. From a journal, he cut out the pranava Om and stuck it on the wall next to him. As regards the picture in His Master's Voice, Kalu Ram asked his father, "What is this?" The father said, "It is the advertisement of a gramophone". Kalu said, "No, it is a special message of Krishna." The father asked, "What is that message?" Kalu replied with a counter question. He asked, "What is the dog in the picture hearing?" Santaram said, "It is the music from the gramophone record." Kalu said, "No, the dog is hearing his master's voice. Look at the dog - he is intensely concentrated and

LIFE OF SAI BABA

intensely listening. We must be equally firm and concentrated and sit. See how I sit. You also should sit like that and listen. Then you will hear Baba's voice." Santaram asked, "How do you know Baba's voice? You were born after he passed away." The boy replied, " I know it, but I will not tell you."

Kalu then took to written japa of Ram, Hari Ram, in addition to oral japa. he did a huge mass of Ram, Hari Ram japa. In 1926, Gadgi Baba came to see the boy, because of his precocity. Kalu then had dropsy and low fever. He was only given Baba's udhi. The disease continued for a while. On *Kartik Suddha Ekadasi*, a day so piously celebrated by thousands of pilgrims at Pandharpur and other Vishnu sthalas, Kalu Ram approached his end. He called Santaram to his bedside and asked for Jnaneswari the family heirloom. it was produced at once. he opened it himself and picked up chapter XIII. *Kshetra Kshetragna vibhaga*. At that time Santaram was feeling heavy with the sadness of the approaching end – the bitterness of parting with Kalu Ram. But Kalu Ram cheered him up and said, "What is there to cry for? Read this. Read aloud for me. I am going today". Santaram's heart was sinking under a load of grief and he could not read. The boy kept the book in front of him and breathed his last. In this way it was a fitting departure on a *Karthik Ekadasi* day for such a life. But yet how sad was such an early death! No wonder that Baba wept in 1918, when he gave the coconut, and clearly perceived that such an early death was to crown such a life.

Sri Santaram's experience will make a special appeal to the reader, especially for two reasons. The first is that in point of spiritual preparation and spiritual effort, he was not at all above the ordinary run of men that we meet with everyday life. Secondly, his experiences cover many years after Baba's *Mahasamadhi* and during this period, the protection and help he and his people enjoyed were the same as before. That is, Sai Baba showed to him frequently even after his *Mahasamadhi* I 1918, that he was still there, always watching him and his people, always ready to help, and help in every direction not only for him and his family but for others also on whose behalf he earnestly put forward any prayer or effort. Step after step, he reader ought to note how his unquestioning faith and simple heart were responsible for Baba's gripping him completely as 'Mine'. Tat is how Baba treated this man as his Ankita or his own child. This Santaram had married three times, one after another, and had a large family of children. Therefore, the occasions on which trouble and danger arose in the family were numerous. instead of his being worried on that account, Baba's help enabled him to maintain placidity and confidence, which sweetened his

LIFE OF SAI BABA

life. His powerful faith in Baba enabled him to live a happy life and virtuous life on earth with the assurance that *Sadgati* would be given to him and to all his people. We shall take up a few accidents and dangers to which his children and family were exposed.

We will take first an incident that occurred in the year 1935 as regards fire. A two year child of Santaram, Ananda by name, was very active and very mischievous; he ran up against the stove on which milk was boiling. He dashed against the whole stove and vessel, and would have expected that his clothes would have caught fire from the stove and the skin scalded by the boiling milk. But neither happened. The milk vessel fell on one side. the stove flew on the other side. In between Ananda full of Anandam, that is, without any injury, sorrow or trouble. This is Baba's vigilant eye of supervision.

We will take another instance of fire. This was in 1926. Sai Haranath, his little child of nine months old, was along with the other children, playing upstairs. The mother, the only guardian or caretaker, who ought to have been present was down on the street. It was deepavali time. One of the older children lighted a squib or cracker and flung it. It fell upon Haranath. None of the children noticed it or considered it serious. Ordinarily the child, who wore two clothes, one under the waist and the other above waist close to the skin would have been burnt to death. But what happened?. In the street, suddenly a fakir appeared, who shouted to the lady. 'Go up. See what is there. Without knowing what it was, she ran up, just as soon as the incident occurred, and found both, neither cloth and the frock of Sai were burning. With her hands she boldly seized the burning the cloths and extinguished the flame. She found that the child's clothes on the upper portion and nether portion were mostly burnt out. yet what happened to the child? Wonder of wonders! Not a bit of scar or burn was on the child; she had come very early to the child's rescue. Now how could she come from the street just in time to extinguish the flame? Who could the fakir be? When she got down with a view to thank the fakir, the fakir had gone. This again is the watchful eye of supervision, 'on those that love Me and those that belong to them'.

There was another incident connected with the same child Sai, when he was two years old. He, like rest of the children, was active, healthy and vigorous. He was playing upstairs. At one end of the terrace, there was a broken wall – a portion of the wall, which ought to have been there, was recently knocked down for purposes of repair. Not noticing its absence, this Sai rushed up and fell down over the debris below. The father was very anxious, and he ran up to see whether the boy

LIFE OF SAI BABA

was alive or how far he was injured. But Sai was standing and laughing. He said, 'Baba held me up in his arms as I fell'. Can a two year old child imagine and tell a lie? Again, we have Baba's eye of supervision, just as he saved Santi Kirvandikar, a three year old child as she fell into a well at Shirdi before 1918.

Then once there was danger to the children from swallowing a poisonous thing. The children were rummaging up Santaram's drawers, and found what they thought was a box of peppermint. An older child, Kalu Ram, put one fancied lozenge in his mouth and handed over another to a younger child. But the taste of it was bitter and the small quantity he had tasted or swallowed made him uneasy. So, he went up to his mother, and the mother thought, looking into his outstretched tongue, which still had a bit of the lozenge on it, that it was a piece of *chunam*. Then she took it out. The children were then asked to show where the box of lozenge was, and they pointed to a box called Pharaoh's snakes as the box of lozenge. This is a deadly poison. It is a compound of magnesium, phosphorous etc., which when lit up, produces a long coil of ashes, which twists in the form of snakes. That is why it is styled, Pharaoh's snake. A doctor was then called in, and he gave then an enema. But that failed to act. then Santaram took up Baba's udhi and tirta and gave them to the child. The child had a good vomit and as a result was saved. the younger child had evidently not eaten or, at any rate, not eaten much, but even to that child udhi and tirta were given, and that child also had a good vomit and was saved.

On another occasion in 1932 Kalu gave a ring to a younger child. Instinctively the child put the ring in to mouth. the ring got stuck in the throat. doctors came and gave enema without any result. Then Santaram gave the child some udhi with tirta and then put his own finger deep into the mouth of the child. He felt where the ring was and pulled it out and thus saved the child.

In 1934 another child aged only three had pneumonia, measles and an abscess on the chest. The child was very weak and was getting weaker and weaker. The doctor was afraid to operate on account of the child's weakness. But Santaram applied antiphlogistine over the abscess and the abscess opened and became a wide open wound. Even the doctor was afraid to operate. so, Santaram prayed to Baba and put a bit of udhi into the wound. The deputy collector Sri. V.M. Jadhav, learning of this asked him whether he was sure of its being cured and, if so, within what time. He answers "n 24 hours" That night Baba appeared in Santaram's dream and said, "Why did you say 24 hours? Why not

LIFE OF SAI BABA

immediately?' Anyhow in 24 hours the wound was healed. Jadhav was convinced that Baba's udhi was a great blessing and took some udhi for his own son who had pneumonia. that saved his son's pneumonia in 24 hours. One see why in *Sai Sahasranamam*, it is said of Baba,

*Gopeem Sathra Yadha Krishnah
Thadha Nachne Kulavanayah*

Sai protected Santaram Nachne's family as Krishna protected the *gopis*

Santaram Nachne was not content with praying for his own children. he prayed for others too. In 1923, as he sat upstairs in his home at Andheri, he found a car being driven fast in his narrow lane. As the car approached, there was a little girl, who could not move away. At once scenting the danger, Santaram cried out, 'Baba save her'. Strangely enough, the car, which had just gone over the child, stopped. Then, when the brake was examined, it was found that it was not working, but somehow a stone had got into the gear and machine stopped. The child was immediately taken to hospital. the medical attendant was not hopeful of the child's survival. Then Santaram said, 'Baba, who had stopped the car miraculously would also save the child'. After 10 or 20 days, the child recovered from its injuries and was saved.

In 1926 on two other occasions Nachne helped his official friends with prayers and advice. A friend of his, a cashier, was dismissed for misappropriation and he was helpless. Nachne advised him to place his trust in Baba, go to Shirdi and pray to Baba for his help. That cashier thought that Sai Baba was a Mohammedan and, therefore, he should not go. Nachne then told him that only hope of his deriving any help was from Baba's grace. then that man got courage, went to Shirdi, prayed to Baba, and returned with a photo of Baba and began to worship it. He was allowed 8 days time to pay up the Rs. 3,000 which he had misappropriated. There the matter closed. There was neither dismissal nor prosecution.

Another person who came to him for his help in similar circumstances was Mr. V.C. Chitnis. He was dismissed from service. Nachne told him to cast his burden on Baba and to make an appeal to the Shirdi *Mandir*, this is, after Baba's passing away. that man went to Baba's *Samadhi Mandir* and prayed for help, and later he was reinstated in service.

These are all temporal matters, but Baba gave Nachne help in spiritual matters also. Let us take S. B. Nachne first. Nachne asked Baba to

LIFE OF SAI BABA

give *Anugraha* saying, "What *japa* shall I do?" He hoped that Baba would give him some *Mantra*. But Baba's reply was, "Go to Devpur, a village 20 miles away from Kopergaon and begin worshipping the stones there which your ancestors worshipped". What a wonderful knowledge Baba had unlike other thought-readers knowledge, which would only read the thoughts of those present. Nachne knew nothing about the stones at Devpur and his ancestors worshipping there. But he quoted Baba's words to his father, and learnt from his father that it was the family custom. Whenever any *Anugraha* or *upadesa* was wanted, a member of Nachne's family would go to Devpur and beg from their family Guru – the descendants of Baba Bagavat – the usual *upadesa*. A copy of *Jnaneswari* written with the hand was presented to some fifth ancestor of this Nachne by the Baba Bagavat of those days and that *Jnaneswari* is still kept as an heirloom in the family and that copy would be taken to the Guru at the time of *upadesa*. At that time they would worship the images, the stones at Devpur. Baba knew all this on account of his *Rithambara prajna* unlike our modern thought-readers who have to find out some connecting link to catch at the ideas, which they express. So, Baba respected the conservatism of the family, and accordingly Santaram Nachne's *Anugraha* was postponed till the usual traditional mode could be adopted. As for the various members of his family, Baba gave his blessings for spiritual progress in a marked degree. Santaram's mother died in 1926, a very happy death from the spiritual standpoint. She kept a photo of Baba up to the last moment in front of her. As the end is nearing, she asked Santaram to sit by her side and read the *Vishnu Sahasranama* aloud. Santaram did so and when she passed away, the last word she uttered were Ram, Ram. According to the Bhagavat Gita, this denotes *sadgati*, the attainment of a high spiritual state, *Yamyam vapi Smaran Bhavam*.

For his second wife, who passed away in 1929, he was anxious to do something to secure her *sadgati*. So, her bones had to be taken to Godavari in Nasik and there disposed of with proper ceremonies. His father being ill, remained at home along with his three year old grand-child. Santaram Nachne set off alone from Victoria Terminus with Rs. 80 in his pocket, without anyone to help him and without knowing what to do. At the V.T. station he found a fellow passenger who took enormous trouble to enquire about everything and to give him direction about everything. That passenger noted that Nachne had no bed and so told him that the night would be chill. He even sent for a blanket and a bed-sheet and gave them to Nachne. When asked how he could get them so quickly, he said that he was a peon in the Bombay Arts School nearby, and that his name was Ganpat Shankar,

LIFE OF SAI BABA

and he was also going to Nasik. That Ganpat Shankar took charge of him and his money and asked him to sleep. Ganpat Shankar locked up his money in a big trunk, which he carried, and woke him up before they reached Nasik Road station. He went on making payments for the bus, priests, etcetra. He attended to Nachne and to all his ceremonies. He accompanied to Ramkund, where the pinda had to be taken and helped him with directions as to how to keep his wife's bones in his hand in a particular hollow where the current of the Godavari water would gradually wash it off. He accompanied him also to the chief temples at Nasik and left him saying, "We will meet again." When Santaram Nachne returned to Andheri and went to the School of Arts and enquired, he discovered that there was no such person as Ganpat Shankar working as a peon in the Bombay Arts School. So, the whole thing was again proof of Baba's anxious care for those who love him.

Baba once appeared in Santaram's mother's dreams and helped her to a decision about marriages. Santaram and his father got Sai bhakti through Das Ganu, but Santaram's own statement of experiences has induced many people to go to Baba. Santaram Nachne has rendered valuable service to Baba in every respect. Above all, the reader would be glad to note that it is open to him to get into the same position of protected child of Baba – an *Ankita* and enjoy all the benefits that Santaram enjoyed.

Santaram Nachne's love for Baba was so great that he could not endure to see that Baba had trouble of any sort. Once when he was massaging Baba's feet, a powerful, well-built lady, Mausi by name, wanted to relieve Baba of some pains which he had in the abdomen. So, she took hot bricks and applied them over Baba's belly and took them off after pressing. Fearing that the pressure of her own powerful hands might cause pain to Baba, Nachne felt sorely distressed and cried out, "Hallo, hallo, Save Baba. Do not be so cruel. Let go, let go." Baba got angry and asked Nachne to "Clear off" because he was interfering with the service rendered by Maushi, with equal love like Nachne's.

DAMODAR SAWALRAM RASANE

Damodar Rasane was a *Kasar* and one of the earliest of Ahmednagar citizen to learn about Sai Baba. He received the benefit of issue in a most remarkable and unexpected manner and was thereby to be the means of broadcasting Sai's fame in all directions through Das Ganu's chapters. He was a very humble man and began as a poor bangle seller but all his transactions yielded good profit and he soon grew rich. He had everything to make life happy, but had issue. Seeing that his first wife could not bear a child, he married a second time. But even the second wife could not bear him a child. Astrological curiosity made him explore into his horoscope and he found that in the *Putra sthanam*, a *papi* was situated, namely, *Kethu*, and there was no *Guru* influence to overcome that evil. Therefore, the local astrologers, who were consulted, declared that issue for him was impossible in this life.

This reminds one strongly of the preface *Mahatmya* to the Srimad Bhagavata where in a similar manner a great *yati* or seer was consulted by a childless Brahmin about the absence of issue and the seer declared that the Brahmin would have no issue in this life and for seven more births. But the Brahmin said that he would kill himself unless the seer by his powers granted him an issue. Then that seer stated, "Well, I will give you this fruit. Let this fruit be eaten by your wife and let her observe religious vows for a year. And if she eats it, she will have a son." Then, the pious consultant took the mango to his wife and told her what the seer said. That lady was a termagant of a

very vicious disposition and never hesitated to cross her husband's will even in serious matters. She said, "If I get pregnant, there will be much discomfort, and if the child falls athwart the womb, am I suffer the pains and serious risks involved or is the seer or my husband going to suffer?" So she determined not to eat the fruit.

She had a sister to whom she narrated the facts. The sister was poor and cantankerous lady was rich. So, she told the poor sister, "You are pregnant. Give your child to me and I will say that it is born of my womb, and he will have all my wealth to enjoy and you and he will be here." That poor sister agreed. As for the fruit, she throw it before the cow, and the cow ate it up. As Mantra cannot be without their effect, the cow calved and brought forth a human child with ears like that of a cow but the rest of the body resembling a human being. That child was in the house. But it was the sister's child of the termagant that was thought by the Brahmin to be the result of his wife's eating the fruit. Then the sister's child proved to be a thorough villain and he broke the heart of the Brahmin who had asked for issue and even of his mother. Then they both died. The boy became a criminal and died. When he became a *Brahma Rakshas*, that is, an evil Spirit, the *Gokarna* cow-eared boy brother of his gave him relief by making him listen to Saptaha of the Bhagavata. This story contained in the sacred Bhagavata *Mahatmya* shows how planetary influence debarring a person from having issue is considered ultimate, but in Damodar Rasane's case, he was more fortunate.

He had heard of Sai Baba and went up to meet him. Sai Baba had kept apart 8 mangoes to be given to him from a basket of mangoes that were sent to Baba. The children were the recipients of the rest of the mangoes and some children wanted more. When Baba said, "There is nothing," the children pointed to the eight mangoes. Baba said, "They are for Damia." But the children said, "Damia is not here." "I know that. He is on the way. He is coming," said Baba. Then, when Baba went out, some of these petted children of Baba stole away four mangoes, and when Rasane came, there were only four mangoes remaining. As soon as he came, Baba gave him those four mangoes. "Eat and die. People are clamouring for mangoes." Eat and die – Damodar was perturbed by hearing the inauspicious word die, and Mahlsapathy noting his perplexity told him that it was a blessing to die at the feet of Baba. Baba was enjoying the humour all the time, as the word die, which he had used, did not refer to the physical death but only to the spiritual death, which is the same as *Bhramh* or *Pramada* coming upon one who gets deeper and deeper in *samsaric* life with the birth of a child after child and the death of several of them.

Pramada a Marityuraham bravimi

That is, It is the intoxication of the world that makes us forget the Real Life; that I call death said Sanatkumara – *Sanat Sujatiya*.

Baba came to the rescue and said, "Damia do not eat these fruits yourself. Give them to your wife". Damia wanted to know to which wife were the fruits to be given. Baba said, "The second wife." Baba also said, "She will have eight children. The first and second would be boys. Name the first Daulat Shah and the second Thana Shah." Taking up his note book immediately, Damia wrote down the names. Then the fruits were taken and given to his second wife, and, unlike the heroine of the Bhagavata *Mahatmya*, she did eat the four fruits. She begot, as stated by Baba, exactly eight children, one after another, their sexes being in the order given by Baba. It took fifteen years for all the children to be born. Therefore, it was clear that the planetary influence in Damia's case was not quite as deadly as that in the Bhagavata case. Perhaps there is an astrological explanation also. There, in the written horoscope, at Damia's birth there was no *Guru balam* to overcome the *papi's* influence. But the All-knowing and All-powerful Guru of Damia was Baba, and his *balam* was there in 1897, and his Baba's *veekshanyam* could overcome all the adverse influence of all the planets put together. As Sri Thyagaraja says,

Griha Balam Emi?

Sri Ramanugaraga Balame Balamu.

It may be noted that the eight mangoes representing eight children that Baba set apart for Damia, four were stolen away. Corresponding to that loss, of the eight children that were born to Damia, four were filched away by Yama. The remaining four are living now (1956) healthy, strong and flourishing. The first named Daulat Shah is now known as Nana Saheb Rasane, and is a trustee of the Sai Sansthan. Daulat means prosperity and fame. With the wealth already acquired by Damia, the children started or carried on a successful business, and they are keeping up the name of Damia for wealth and generosity. In addition to the above, Nana Saheb, the eldest son was helped by Baba in his spiritual development. He is now carrying on Sai propaganda, spreading the Sai faith by lectures, etc., and is fully deserving of the name, Daulat Shah. When Daulat Shah was five years old, and when he first began writing the letters *Hari* on the slate, Baba held his hand and helped him to write. After that he was, taken to a school at Shirdi. At his marriage also, Baba helped him. When there were several girls

LIFE OF SAI BABA

offered for this rich man's son, Baba was requested by Damia to select the one, which he considered proper out of four horoscopes. Then Baba selected a poor girl's horoscope; and that was the girl that Rasane married, and that was a happy marriage. It took place at Pandharpur and Damia went to Baba to invite him to Pandharpur. Baba replied "I am with you. Do not fear. Wherever you think of me, there I am with you." Still Damia pressed him to attend. Then Baba said, "Without God's permission, nothing can be done by me. I will send Shama to attend the marriage as my deputy." And Shama attended the marriage.

The manner, in which Damia got children by his wife consuming mangoes, naturally reminds one of the way in which the Ayodhya king Dasaratha got his children. Dasaratha was also childless, and after consulting Vasishta, his *Kula Guru*, he was advised by the Guru, to perform an *Asvamedha Yaga* and *Puthra Kameshti Yaga*. In the latter *yaga*, conducted by Vasishta, a divine person *Rishyasringa* came out of the fire with a vessel full of nectarine, *payasam* and that was offered to Dasaratha with the direction that his wives should drink the same and thereby have issue. Dasaratha distributed it amongst his wives and, in consequence of it, had four sons. In the case of Damia, he was not rich enough to conduct an *Asvametha Yaga*, nor were there any rishis to conduct a *Puthra Kameshti Yaga*, and yet he got his four children just like Dasaratha. Sai Baba represented in his own personality and in the mangoes that he gave, the *Asvamedha Yaga*, *Puthra Kameshti Yaga*, Vasishta, *Rishyasringa* and divine nectar. So, the childless devotees of Sai Baba look upon him as a never failing giver of the boon of children, and others who are afflicted by being in the bad books of the planets look to him for getting rid of their other evils. Above all, the words of Baba as to issue proved strictly true. There was not a single mistake about them. Our astrologers, as Baba himself has said, make declarations about future and only half of them come true. In the case of Baba, there was no such thing as missing. This may be described in various ways by the learned – *Satyavak*, *Satyasankalpa*. Some may call it *Vaksiddhi*. Others may call it *Trikala jnana*. Some others may refer to it, as *Yatha Sankalpa Samsiddhi*. Still others may call it, *Isatvam*. These names are found in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras in the Srimad Bhagavata, and in the Chandogya Upanishad. Some others may say, it is merely pre-cognition, that is knowledge of the future. But whether the future is fixed enough for one to have knowledge of is a moot question, and the difficulty of its being unfixed is overcome by people putting forward an alternative explanation of Baba's faculty, calling it either knowledge of the future or control of the future.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Rishinam Punar Adhyanam
Vacham Artho Anudhavati

This means, In the case of ancient rishis, events follow their words, that is, where they declare a thing is, there that thing comes about by their will power – Satyavak Satyasankalpa.

Therefore, Damia's having derived a blessing of this very rare sort was the means by which Baba's fame for the grant of issue and other similar blessings even in the face of adverse planetary influences got widely published in the town of Ahmednagar and in the neighbourhood. This was around 1895 to 1897. Damia wishing to show his gratitude undertook to pay the expenses of a grand ceremony of 'The standards procession' on every Ramanavami Day. Two very tall standards were nicely decorated and carried from the Mosque through the streets of Shirdi on that day every year and finally brought back to be planted at Baba's Masjid to remain there as a mark of the residence of the weird saint. Damia, not content with this service, was always ready to undertake further trouble and expense for Baba in other matters. At the time of the reconstruction of the Masjid, he made his contribution as also on other similar occasions. But the best contribution that Damia made was his becoming an Ankita or child of Baba, whom Baba looked after wherever he was and wherever he thought of Baba. Baba told him, "I am with you wherever you are and whenever you think of me." This was said when Damia was afraid that Baba would leave his body and would no longer be helping him personally with his presence. Baba's assurance, Damia says in his statement in 1936 has been, perfectly true. Baba is with him and frequently appears before him. When he is not personally present, Damia casts chits before Baba, and the chits always give the answers of Baba. He says in the innumerable cases that he consulted Baba on chits, not even on one occasion was Baba's direction found to be wrong. But we may first mention the sort of assurance that Baba gave him before *Mahasamadhi*.

Baba was relied upon by Damia as his great asset, the one shield against all sorrow and trouble, the one supreme protector who would guard him against every evil. So, whenever he was in trouble, he thought of Baba. On one occasion, his wife's *nath*, nose ornament, usually considered to represent the *Mangalya*, was stolen by an old-time servant. The matter was reported to the police. They came and seized the thief and after making a search, arrested him. Damia felt hurt in every way, firstly by the loss of the *Mangalya* ornament and

LIFE OF SAI BABA

next the fact that the thief was a man whom he had trusted for thirty years. That such a servant should turn a traitor was a shock to him. So, he at once went to Shirdi and Baba, noting how upset he was, told Shama to give him a good fine feast. Then he was given a coating of sandal paste and Baba assured him he was with him, and restored his courage, self-possession and equanimity. On other occasions also, he always appealed to Baba and Baba came to his aid. Damia had implicit reverence for and faith in Baba and obeyed his directions. Although he was very orthodox in his ways, he invited Baba for a meal on an important occasion at Shirdi. Baba declined to go and then Damia asked him, "Send at least Bala Patel", who was Baba's constant attendant, though a *Harijan*. Baba said, "I will send him. But do not cry *Dhut, Dhut* at him and keep him far away from your own place of eating." Damia agreed and, in spite of his orthodoxy, spread a plate for Bala next to himself. This was a great achievement in those days at the beginning of 20th century.

Damia has said that his mind was always dwelling on Baba, and he saw him at his own house at Ahmednagar. sometimes, he says, Baba abused him and even beat him fiercely. But he adds, he knew that, as with Akkalkote Maharaj, blows and abuses have an auspicious ending. So, he always found that blows and abuse were not matters for regret.

On religious matters, he had very little occasion to seek Baba's assistance. It was chiefly temporal blessings that he got. For instance, when his son Nana had only one son, Damia prayed to Baba at his Samadhi for a second grandson and a second grandson was born. Being almost wholly occupied with worldly affairs, his consultations with Baba were only on business and domestic matters. On one occasion, a Bombay cotton broker told him that he had a good lot of Rs. 50,000 or Rs. 60,000 with him, and he could safely speculate in cotton and earn lakhs of rupees and that too very quickly. At once Damia wrote to Shama to ask Baba for permission to launch on this speculation. When letter came to Baba, Baba said, "Damia wants to catch at the sky. His head is wrong. He is trying to think of lakhs. I write to him that his present position is not bad, and ask him not to think of lakhs". after the letter came, Damia with great regret dropped the idea of cotton speculation, but not finally. He thought he would go directly to meet Baba, and then induce Baba to give the permission by offering a share in the profits to Baba. so he went to Shirdi and when massaging Baba's legs, was thinking of his plan. Baba at once said, "Damia, I am not in anything." That is, Baba was not going to be a partner in any speculation or similar affair. Baba did not want money at all and, if he wanted, speculation was not necessary for him.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Prakamyā is one of the *siddhis* forming part of one's divine nature. Baba said, "I am God". He also said, "I have vast powers." Baba could command large amounts at will. But he had no necessity for wealth.

Again on another occasion, Damia found people trading in grain. So, he wanted Baba's permission for himself to trade in grain. Baba said, "No." He was wondering why. He had friends who advised him that grain prices were rising, and if the grains were stored up the yield of profit would be cent per cent or more. But Baba said, "Arre, you will be buying at five *seers* per rupee and selling seven *seers* per rupee. For a month or two, the prices were rising still, Baba's prophecy seemed to be false. But when *Asvina* came, the monsoon rains were abundant and everywhere the crops were excellent, and so prices fell and the grain hoarders suffered a loss. Damia discovered that Baba had saved him from this calamity.

Damia had occasional curiosity which prompted him put questions. First he wanted to know if when so many were crowding around Baba whether they all got any benefit from him. This was a mental question. Baba at once replied, "Look at the mango tree in blossom. if all flowers turn fruit, what a splendid crop it would be? But do they? Most fall off by the wind. Very few remain." The second question was, that, if Baba should pass away, how helpless Damia would be. This also a mental question. To this Baba answered, "I will be with you whenever you think of Me and wherever you think of Me." This was mentioned before 1918 and is fulfilled even after 1918. Damia says, "Even after his *Mahasamadhi*, He is still with me. He is still guiding me, as per his statement made in 1936." So, he is one of the Ankita children of Baba, whom Baba guided, corrected and helped.

Mrs. TARABAI SADASIVA TARKHAD

Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiva Tarkhad of Poona, is also one of those devotees of Baba who derived very peculiar and very great advantages, mostly in temporal matters, but partly in spiritual matters also and therefore her experiences with Baba's name was through her brother-in-law Sri. R. Tarkhad of Bombay, who was a Director of a mill there. He had been to Baba, and had a very high impression of Baba's power and nature. When he visited his brother's house, he spoke of Baba in terms of high praise, which naturally roused Mrs. Sadasiva Tarkhad's attention for a special reason. Her little child Nalini Tarkhad had taken ill suddenly at the age of 15 months, and she was perplexed as to what to do. Hearing of Baba's fame, she said, 'if Baba is the wonderful Saint that my brother in law stated he is, then he should make the child recover, and if he makes the child recover, the whole family with the child will go to Shirdi and pay their respects to Baba in person.' Very shortly after the vow was made, the child did recover, and so, she, her husband and the child went up to Shirdi. The lady had already a fairly good grounding of religious experience by contact with other Saints and her first impressions of Baba are all the more valuable on that account. She found the most prominent feature about Baba was his eyes. She says,

'There was such power and penetration in the glance that none could continue to look at his eyes. One felt that Sai Baba was reading him or her through and through. Soon one lowered one's eyes and bowed down. One felt that he was not only in one's heart but in every atom of

LIFE OF SAI BABA

one's body. A few words, a gesture would reveal to one that Sai Baba knew all about the past and the present and even the future and everything else. There was nothing else to do for one, except to submit trustfully and to surrender oneself to him. And there He was to look after every minute detail and guide one safe through every turn and every vicissitude of life. He was the Antaryami – call him God or Satpurusha In Sahajasthithi or what you like. But the overpowering personality was there, and, in his presence no doubts, no fears, no questionings had any place and one resigned oneself and found that was the only course, the safest and the best course'.

From her first contact, she went on getting experiences of his power, his All-knowing and All-pervasive personality, and all his protecting care shielding her wherever she went at any time whatsoever. She had become Baba's Ankita, by complete surrender with full faith in him. For the benefit of strangers, she was kind enough to give some instances of Baba's Antaryamitva that she could vouch far from personal experiences or from that of some intimate friends. Shirdi was notorious for being infested with snakes and is so even now after lighting arrangements are made. When she went there first, there was no street lighting and no village committee was working. She was walking about at night in the street. But suddenly it struck her that she should stop. There was no sight, no sound, nor object visible to account for her stopping. But somehow she felt she must and in a very short time, a light was brought. Then she saw that if she had taken another single step it would have been over a serpent that was lying there, quiet. But how she managed to stop then, and why the light came, were never explained to her. It was all Baba's grace, his protection and his ever watchful eye over his children. She says that, like this, 'He saved her life again and again on several occasion, both before and after his Mahasamadhi.

One very interesting instance of Baba's Antaryamitva that she gives was in respect of a leper, who came to Baba to take his darsan. The poor man's disease was very far advanced, and he had very little strength. he was stinking all over. It was with great difficulty that he could slowly get up the three steps of the Mosque, and then like every visitor he had to go to the dhuni to pick up the ashes and then give it to Sai Baba, placing his head on Baba's feet. This lady being fairly near, found that his prolonged presence and the intense stench he gave out, was very difficult to bear. At last he moved off, and then she felt relief and said within herself, 'Thank god, He is off.' Sai Baba at once looked at her, sending her a piercing glance. Of course he knew her thought. he ordered the leper to be brought back. The man came.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Slowly he clambered up, full of his stench and bowed again. He was carrying a parcel in his hand – a very dirty parcel. Baba took it up and asked 'What is this.' and opened it. It had pedas. Baba picked up a piece and gave one piece to the lady and put a bit into his own mouth. Baba said to the lady 'eat'. There was no option but to obey and she had to eat it. Then the man was sent back with the rest of the pedas. This is what he wished, that is, that Sai Baba should accept a part of the peda, and return the rest as prasad. Baba satisfied him, though that man had not the courage first when he arrived there, to present the dirty packet to Baba. Baba used the occasion to teach her valuable lessons in humanity, fraternity, sympathy, endurance and trust in Baba's supreme wisdom, which knows when there is danger and when there is none. She did not contract leprosy of course. She declares that whenever they had difficulties to get over, they had simply to stay or stand in Baba's presence, without the necessity to utter a single word. Baba knew at once everything in the minds of his children, and would do the needful himself. She gives one instance.

They had taken their servant with them, who was suffering from pain in the waist. as there was no hospitals at Shirdi, her husband went up and stood before Baba. At once Baba said, 'My whole leg is paining. The pain is Great'. Someone suggested, 'Why not do something to relieve the pain.' 'Yes' said Baba 'if green leaves are heated and applied over it, the pain will go away.' 'What leaves, Baba?' the asked. Baba said, ' The green leaves near Lendi.' 'Is it korphad?' somebody asked, 'Yes' said Baba, and added, if that is brought, split into two, warmed over the fire and applied, it will do. Her husband knew at once that it was Baba's prescription for their servant and he took up korphad, warmed it over the fire, and applied it to his servant's waist. That man cured.

Baba's saving her from the snake was not the only instance in which she found that Baba was present, invisibly keeping a watch over her and other children in all places. She had other instances also proving the same. As regards her physical health – her eyes were giving her great trouble. She went and sat before Baba. the eyes were paining and water was flowing freely from them. Baba looked at her. Then the eyes ceased to pain and water ceased to flow. But tears were trickling down from Baba's own eyes. The accurate diagnosis of diseases take doctors much time and efforts, and to discover appropriate remedy takes more time and more efforts. In the case of Baba, the diagnosis, the remedy and everything was instantaneous. A deep-seated organic disease abruptly and suddenly got cured; and the power of drawing disease from her to himself by pure will power, was something

LIFE OF SAI BABA

marvellous and something uncommon. Few would care even if they have the power to draw disease to themselves.

Baba has declared that he is inside every creature and every object to control all voluntary and involuntary movements. Therefore his declaration, 'I am not at Shirdi' while he was there, should be interpreted as referring to his Antaryami nature. he was not confined to the 3 ½ cubits height of body. We cannot get over the idea that we are the body. But he was ever free from such narrow ideas and attachments. One important difference between Sai Baba and several other saints she had seen, is mentioned by her. Some other saints used to get into the Samadhi or trance condition, and then they would forget their body. They would utter things in the trance state revealing supranormal knowledge or power. but in the case of Sai Baba, he never had to go into trance to achieve anything or reach any higher position. Every moment he was exercising a double consciousness, namely, the Ego called Sai Baba and the Antaryami of all, superseding all egos and resting in the Paramatma. He was at the same time exercising and manifesting the powers and features of both states of consciousness. Some other saints with much trouble would read other man's minds' for a time, and then lapse into their original condition. But with Sai Baba, his knowledge of other people's minds was not a matter of effort. He was in the All-knowing state always. Baba was not without worldly wisdom. he would higggle with cloth sellers and beat down the price of a yard of cloth from 8 annas to 5 annas. People would then suppose what a greedy man Sai Baba was. But when it came to payment, he might pay Rs.40 instead of Rs.15 for the cloth he took, and then people would think that he was a mad man. But he had his own reasons first for the higgling and next for the liberal payment.

His power and nature, being fully understood by her and other similar devotees, made her regard Shirdi as a veritable paradise, a real Bhooloka Vaikuntam. She says,

'Directly as we went there, we felt safe, that nothing could harm us. when I went sat in his presence, I always forgot my pain-nay, the body itself, with all it's mundane concerns and anxieties. Hours would pass, and I would be in blissful unconsciousness of their passing. That was a unique experience shared, I believe, by all his real devotees. He was All-in All and the All for us. We could never think of his having limitations. Now that he has passed away, I feel what a terrible loss it is, as I can know longer pass hours together in blissful unconsciousness time and affairs at his feet. We feel we have lost our soul; our bodies alone are left to us now.'

LIFE OF SAI BABA

The lady qualifies her statement next by saying 'Baba has not all together vanished, he is still living now and gives ample proof of his powers and protecting care in many matters off and on, though the impressions about these, because of his body being invisible, are not so great as those that the devotees enjoyed when they sat in his presence at Shirdi.' She gives instance of Baba's miraculous protection and help, even when he was not physically present – before and even long after his Mahasamadhi in 1918.

One instance is this. it was probably in 1915, that she had for over one month a splitting neuralgic headache. A number of remedies were tried, all to no purpose. She felt she must die, and that would be the relief she thought. Anyhow, she thought, 'Why not go and die at Shirdi at Baba's Feet? That would be a privilege.' With that view she started off with her husband and came to Kopergaon from Panchgani where they were staying for the summer. At Kopergaon, they have to cross the Godavari river. Then it struck her, 'Anyway death is to come upon me soon. So, why not have the Punya, merit, of a Godavari bath before death?' So she boldly took a bath in the Godavari – in that cold water. Ordinarily that would intensify the headache and accelerate death. But on this occasion, when she came out of the water, the neuralgic headache ceased and thereafter ceased for ever. This is surely Baba's miracle.

The other instance she cites was in 1927, nine years after Baba's Mahasamadhi. With the rest of the family, she set off to Shirdi. She was in the family way, but anyhow she boldly went for the pilgrimage. After her arrival at Shirdi, the foetus die in the womb. Her own features were turning blue and her blood was getting poison. There was neither midwife nor doctor there. Though some medicines from Ahmednagar were brought, they proved of no avail. Then Mr. Sadasiva Tarkhad went to Sakori and asked Upasani for help. Upasani's reply was 'you have got the best doctor and best nurse over there at Shirdi; why do you come to me?' What happened further she did not personally know, because she became unconscious. Her husband says that in her unconscious condition, she went on speaking and giving directions as to what should be done and the directions she gave were followed in addition to the application of udhi and thirtha of Baba. Then the foetus was expelled along with other matter. For weeks she remain unconscious and at last recovered full consciousness and health. This is nothing but Baba's kind care for his child.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Baba's care and help were also extended to her husband. For sometime, he was the manager of a mill. Then his services were terminated, and he had to remain for a considerable time without any job. He went to Shirdi in the hope that Baba would help him to get a job. But soon after he reached Shirdi, Baba instead of providing him with a job, told him, 'Tatya Patil and others are going to attend a cinema at Ahmednagar. You better go with them and thence go home to Pune.' He felt mortified that, without getting a job, he was asked to attend amusements. Anyhow Baba's order had to be obeyed. He went and attended the cinema and after leaving Nagar, he went to Pune. But what a surprise 'Baba, he thought, had sent him to Pune simply for nothing. But on the other hand at Pune at the mill, a labour strike had broken out. The authorities concerned were anxious to recall him as he was a very capable manager of labour, and they had wired for him to Bombay and other places. Meanwhile Baba knowing of the wire and the situation, had sent him just in time to get his job. So, Baba, appearing to be doing harm, really was conferring a blessing by his seemingly unkind orders.

At times Baba's help to her and to the family appeared to be unkind, but it was really beneficial. In 1915, she and her husband went up to Shirdi. Baba told her to go and put up with Ramakrishna Ayi for accommodation. That lady gave it on the strict condition that Mrs. Tarkhad should carry out all the menial labour that might be ordered by Ramakrishni, who was a Brahmin widow and the latter had a very sharp tongue and would rebuke her for shortcomings. So, Mrs. Tarkhad found that Baba had imposed a very painful position on them, but what was their recompense? She found that Ramakrishni Ayi was possessed of powers of clairvoyance and thought reading. Some message would come for Mr. Tarkhad. At once Ramakrishni, or Ayi as she was called, would read off the reply from Tarabai's mind and send a reply. In other matters also when Baba sent unusual orders, Ayi would have the things ready. Then Ayi related the history of Mrs. Tarkhad's past life. Above all, Ayi lived only for Baba's service. She was very deeply devoted to Baba and rendered very great service to the Sansthan. It was therefore an education in service that she got by staying with her. Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiva Tarkhad noted several facts about Baba, which would be valued by our readers. Therefore, her statement on these matters may be quoted here.

'Baba in the mornings would sit near his dhuni and wave his arms and fingers about, making gestures which conveys no meaning to the onlookers and saying Haq which means 'God'. Baba's methods of imparting spiritual benefit were hardly noticeable. He would speak of

LIFE OF SAI BABA

god only rarely and that with feeling. His religious practise could hardly be discovered by any one. But Baba's purity, strength, regularity and self-denial were prominent. He would always go and beg his food even during His illness. He would take the begged food and eat only a little of it. the rest would be given away or taken away. Baba's talk would be about *Vanis, Telis*, and they looked like meaningless jargon. But it was intentionally so. Baba's words would be understood only by these whom he intended to enlighten.

*Jayamani Jaisa Bhav,
Taya Taysa Anubhav*

says the *arati* song. That is, You get an experience of Baba in accordance with what you think of him. Baba's stoic indifference to comforts was most impressive. He did not care for any comforts, not even for his residence. The Mosque, which was a worthless, rumbling, old and dilapidated building, and though it needed repairs, he put up with it. He did not want it to be repaired, and when others tried to repair it, he obstructed their efforts. It was only at night when he went to the chavadi on alternate days, that the reconstruction of the mosque could be pushed through. In one night they had to put up the whole flooring.

Baba had no particular marga, as the yoga marga etcetera. But if any person came to grief in his yoga marga, he could give relief. One yoga sadhaka had bleeding piles and came to Baba and got relief at Baba's hands. His liberality and generosity were remarkable. He would daily get dakshina in three figures; one hundred to three hundreds. He scattered the whole thing away. Bhajan parties and fakirs were liberally supplied when they came up, and they were always coming up. His self control and equanimity were equally remarkable. he had no particular preference of one dish over another, though some people thought he liked mangoes or sira or even country beans. He was accessible at all hours of the day and night to people. He himself said, My durbar is always open at all hours. All his actions were open and above board. there was nothing done in secrecy. He had nothing shameful to conceal and no fear from scrutiny. his most marked feature was perfect calm and total freedom from care and anxiety. He had no interests to serve or protect, no institutions to support, no acquisitions to safeguard and no private property to feel anxious about. With a very large daily income, he left only Rs.16 at the moment of his passing away from his body. He was perfectly just and impartial. He was not obsequious to the rich and highly placed nor supercilious and contemptuous to the lowly. Revenue Commissioners and collectors and lower officials came in large numbers, and D.Os.,

LIFE OF SAI BABA

D.C.s., and Mamlatdars poured in. Also there came the ragamuffins in the street, paupers and beggars *ad nauseam*. He treated them all with perfect equality. Baba's personality was far greater than of any other saint that this devotee had seen.

M.B. REGE

Sri M. B Rege gave out his experiences to B. V. N. swami in June 1936, and confirmed or added to them by subsequent talks occasionally. A chapter about him has a special value because, as ex-Judge of the Indore High Court, his words would command great credit. As a person of great education and as one who has been deriving immense benefits from Sai's contact, an account of his life and experiences has special importance.

First and foremost, his view of Sai Baba must be mentioned. He says, "I look upon Sri Sai Baba as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. I did so before his *Mahasamadhi* in 1918, and I do so now. To me he had no limitations. Of course, when he was with us, there was the fleshy tabernacle. That was brought to our notice prominently at times. But mostly his infinite aspect was what remained before me. I thought of him as a mental or spiritual image in which the finite and infinite blended very perfectly – yet allowing the finite to appear before us at times. Now that the body has been cast off, the infinite alone remains as Sai Baba. Sri Rege's special qualification and reason for getting such great benefit from Baba was the way in which he developed his religious side from the beginning. *Durga* of Goa was the family Goddess, and he was keen on her worship from infancy. He would pray that she should keep him ever happy. Later, that is, in his eight year, he had *Upanayanam*, *Gayatri* and *Sandhya* and he observed these strictly. He was led then from *Durga* to Narayana or Vishnu. the Ravi Varma picture of Dhuruva Narayana made him a very deep impression on him. He meditated on that picture. He, however

LIFE OF SAI BABA

found that when meditating on Vishnu in that picture, Dhuruva's figure constantly intruded and disturbed his concentration. So, he cut out Dhuruva's figure and began to pray that Vishnu should place him in the position of Dhuruva, which he had cut out – that is, he wanted *laya* at the feet of God. Along with his devotional meditation, he was practising, as a boy, both *Asana* and *Pranayama*, and could pass one or two hours sitting in *Padmasana* or *Siddhasana*, and for over 15 minutes a single picture or idea used to occupy in his mind. All this he did without a Guru. Breath control also he succeeded in. Later he could regulate or even stop his heart beat. This concentration on Vishnu and prayers had its effect in his 21st year, when his practice and prayer bore fruit.

One night in 1910, he had three successive trance visions or dreams. In the first, he found himself in the lying down posture, that is, in bed and noticed a change. The body lay separate from him and he stood out and looking on the body. So, he was not the body and in front of him the gracious Vishnu Narayana figure was standing. This suggested that by the grace of Vishnu to whom he prayed, the first essential step in one's spiritual progress, namely, getting over the delusion that we are the body, Dehatma Buddhi had started. An hour later, he had the next experience. Again, his body lay on the bed, and he was still standing outside it. Vishnu Narayana also was standing in front of him. But this time, there was another figure standing next to Vishnu Narayana and Sri Vishnu pointing to that figure told him, 'This Sai Baba of Shirdi is your man; you must resort to him.' This was the introduction of the first great step in all progress, namely, the securing of a Guru. Strangely enough, by God's grace he was getting over the Dehatma Buddhi, but at the same time to make it ripen and lead him to the fullest success, the Guru was pointed out to him, the Guru who was to seize him for life. And here the second vision ended. The third started an hour or so later. Here the first feeling he had was that he was travelling somewhere, evidently in the air. He came to a village and asked some one what that village was. He learnt that it was Shirdi. Then, he asked, 'If it is Shirdi, is there a Sai Baba here?'. He was told, 'Yes; go and see'. He was taken to the Mosque, and there he saw Sai Baba sitting with legs outstretched. In the vision, at once he approached and reverently placed his head on Baba's feet. But Baba got up and said, 'Do you take my darshan? I am your debtor; I must take your darshan'. And Baba placed his head on Rege's feet. These visions ended. They produced a powerful impression.

Sai Baba began to grow up in his soul. He felt a strong impulse to go to Shirdi. But he was still a student. After some time, he did succeed in

LIFE OF SAI BABA

going to Shirdi, Rege went and prostrated, placing his head on Baba's feet. Baba said, 'What! Do you worship a man?' At once, the rebuff struck Rege, and struck him keenly. He retreated and went to the mandap and sat there. How long he sat, he did not know. He was simply stunned. No doubt he had, as a student, caught the modern and stoic idea that a man should not be worshipped. He was puzzled. His dream told him Baba was to accept him and be his Guru. But there he was getting a rebuff. It is true that his idea on the subject of man worship had not become quite clear and crystallized. But what was he to do? He was determined, as he had come to Shirdi to see whether Baba would accept him or not. so, he sat on dazed till all the crowd dispersed. Suddenly he opened his eyes and saw that Baba was alone at the Mosque and there was no one with him.

That was in the afternoon. The rule is, in the afternoons Baba is alone, and nobody should disturb him. though the rule was that nobody should approach Baba during that time, he still thought that this was his only chance. if Baba should strike him, he would not care. So, he approached Baba gradually. Baba saw him approaching and beckoned him to come to him. So, he went up, and again placed his head upon Baba's feet. Baba embraced him at once, made him sit close to him and then said, 'You are my child. When strangers are in the company, we keep the children off.' Then he understood why he had not been accepted till then. The words, 'You are my child' showed that he was really this Guru's Ankita sishya. So, the vision was true. Vishnu had granted him his destined Guru, Sai Baba, and Rege should stick to that Guru for ever.

Baba told him to go and be with Ramakrishni, also known as Ayi who was a real mother to him. She loved him as if he was her own son. Baba sent her one roti to her as prasad, and he sent two rotis on the days when Rege was at Shirdi. This Ayi had dedicated her love and all to Baba. She lived only for Sai Baba, and her delight was to do everything he wanted or what was needed for his sansthan. So, she had plenty of work to get done for Baba, and people like Rege, Purandhare and others were constantly given this *Dasya Seva* by her, for Baba. But Seva was not the only item or step for his religious improvement. Being fairly advanced, Ayi had developed certain powers in addition to her bhakti. Her concentration had evidently produced results. her concentration was helped very much by her command of music. She had a good voice and could play the sitar. Rege also had a good voice and was versed in music. They would compare notes and they agreed that, for their spiritual progress, secrecy about their efforts was necessary. So, they would compare notes and made

LIFE OF SAI BABA

resolutions and kept them secret. In accordance with Kabir's motto, '*Jinne Kamaya Unne Chupaya*' what one has gained, he conceals, they both agreed that songs and hymns were very good for increasing *bhava*. Yet for actual *manolaya*, they attracted too much attention of the outside public and, therefore did not suit them. So, they determined that the proper step for *manolaya*, was *Japa*. And what *Japa* should they make? She said that many used the name of Ram, Vittal and that so far as she was concerned Sai was her God. So, Sai was quite sufficient for her. Rege naturally adopted the same. so, they went on making Sai *nama* japa and, luckily for Rege, Baba asked him soon afterwards what he had been doing in the morning. He answered *Japa*.

Baba: Japa of what name?

Rege: of my God.

Baba: What is your God?

Rege: You know it.

Baba: That is all right.

So, Sai Nama Japa was approved from the very beginning by Sai Baba also. Japa is a sadhana. What is the sadhya or goal then? For this again, they gained light from Baba. The goal was patent from everything that Baba said and did. The goal was that through *laya* to reach God, especially in the form of the loving Guru-God; and intense and passionate love was alike the sadhana and sadhya. For love at its perfection is Bliss and Bliss is God. Baba's wonderful love stamped its impress upon both Ayi and him. Their sadhya and sadhana were love.

About *sadhana*, Baba gave him a hint. Religious books are generally regarded as very important sadhana for the beginner. On *Guru Poornima* day, the devotees usually go to Baba, and place a book in his hands, so that they might get it back with his *Ashirvada* and that they might study it with profit and benefit. On one *Guru Poornima* day, all had taken books. Rege was there. He had not taken any book. Then Baba looking at him and said, "These people want to find God, that is Brahma in these books. There is however Bhramh, that is, worldly confusion or delusion in these books. You are all right. Do not read books. But keep me in your heart and if you unify or harmonise head and heart, that is enough'.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Of course, study of books is not ruled out. on the other hand, religious study is very useful and Baba recommended Eknath's Bhagavata, Bhavarta Ramayana and Jnaneswari. He recommended these to Kaka Dixit, B.V. Dev, Chandorkar and others. He also made Chandorkar read the Bhagavad Gita. but on the whole the usual tendency to over emphasize the need of books was discountenanced by Baba. The Guru is the only sadhana of the pupil in Baba's school, and the Guru's knowledge and power sink into the *sisya* by the intensity of faith and love of the *sisya*. For that purpose, to promote faith and love, Baba gave ample and almost perpetual proof of his omniscience, omnipresence and other divine qualities. So, Rege was getting constant proof of these qualities and love from Baba.

Ramakrishna Ayi was anxious to direct society important people to Baba's feet, and wanted to get P.R. Avaste, a retired Judge of Gwalior, to Baba's feet. so, Mr. Rege tried to bring him over to Shirdi. Avaste had heard about Baba, but there were obstacles which prevented him from going to Shirdi. Baba, on the silent prayer of Rege, helped Avaste to get over those obstacles. The way in which those difficulties were overcome, being very interesting, may be set out here. The first objection Avaste had to go to Shirdi was that he had already another Guru, a lady with a remarkable personality and powers, and going to see Baba would be Gurudroha towards her. Then Mr. Rege told him that Sai Baba was the same spirit as the spirit in all Gurus and, therefore, in that lady also, and he might therefore go to Shirdi and feel that the lady was in Baba.

He agreed to go during Christmas of 1914. But there was a great obstacle, Avaste was very slow and allowed arrears of work to accumulate. so, he received orders that he should not avail himself of Christmas holidays unless the arrears were cleared off. Avaste then sat up and, in the first few days of the holidays, cleared off the work much to his own surprise. This was the evidence of Baba's help. When they started, there was another and very unexpected obstacle. It was war time in 1914 and trains were commandeered. Going from Indore to Manmad, they had to pass Mhow, a Cantonment station. At that station, their train was commandeered. all passengers were asked to get down, and they also had to get down. the trip seemed to come to nothing. But Rege always had Baba in his heart. What happened? Just as they were about to get down, the Commanding officer came up and asked them to stay on, as their particular compartment was not going to be taken by the military, because it was too small and unnecessary.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Obviously, it was Baba's work and Baba avowed it when they reached Shirdi. then when they were in the train, Rege went on all night with his chantings and bhajans, calling on Baba. When they reached Shirdi, Baba asked Rege, 'Who is this *Pissat*, the crazy man with you?' This proved to be a prophecy. Again Baba went on referring to Rege saying, 'Look at him. He will not be content to come alone. He insists on others being brought.' This again had reference to Rege's desire not to start until and unless Avaste also started with him. Again Baba said, 'They wanted to put my children out of the train. But I told the Commanding Officer, they are my children, let them come to me.' This indicated how they were exceptionally allowed to travel by that train. Lastly, Baba said, 'He gave me no sleep, last night. All night, Baba, Baba, was the cry around my bedside.'

These four references showed that Baba was watching his children and using all his powers to influence all minds to favour their pious endeavours to be with him and profit thereby. Yet Avaste could not get over the idea that in having come to Shirdi, there was *droha* towards his lady Guru. To solve the difficulty, Rege sent up four flowers of *Mogra*, tied together with a string to Baba asking him to untie the knots. Baba smelt the flowers and sent them back saying that they should be untied at the *Shala*, that is, at *Ayi's* residence. Again at the midday *naivedya*, Avaste concealed a ball of rice under the *sthali* he carried, and said to himself, if Baba accepts this ball as a *pinda*, then he would feel sure that his deceased lady Guru was in Baba. When Avaste went up, he stumbled and picked up some portion of the ball and went near Baba. Baba put out his hands and said, 'Give it to me, I shall accept it and send it to the place you wish.' Avaste got excited and said, 'Hallo, My Guru is dead, and this person is living.' And he got flurried. His mind lost its balance. He began to see Baba all round and behaved like a mad man, thinking that Baba was trying to kill him and practising magic against him. About midnight he was saying, 'What? Have you got into the clutches of a wicked magician who is trying to ruin and kill me?' Rege could not bear any more. He went up, stood near the Mosque and mentally prayed to Baba for relief. Next morning, when he went to bow to Baba, the latter said, 'Take this man Avaste out of the gates of Shirdi'. When that was done, Avaste become normal again and lost his *pissat* qualities.

Baba always wanted to see that his devotees were not subject to *Raga-Dweshha*. As Rege sat near Baba at the mosque once, bunches of red plantains were brought by some one. Rege was fond of them, and he thought that he was going to have a good time of it. Baba, of course knew that passed in his heart. So, when the fruits came, Baba

LIFE OF SAI BABA

took up one fruit, peeled it off gave the pulp to others, and the skin was thrown to Rege with the word *Khav* – for him to eat, as it was the red skin that attracted him. The same thing was done a second time and third time. All the three skins were quietly swallowed up by Rege on account of his powerful bhakti to his Guru. At last, Baba took up one plantain and turning to him, said, 'Have I given you nothing?' Then, after peeling off the skin of one plantain, he bit off a portion and said it was nice. He presented it to the mouth of Rege for him to bite off. Rege bit off a portion and Baba bit off the next portion; so that, between the two, that fruit was finished. So, Baba gave Rege a very well remembered and impressive lesson on greed in the matter of eating.

Baba's identity with him was the matter on which Rege was most keen in 1912, probably on Guru Poornima day, when he went to Shirdi, he carried no garland. All the other went and garlanded Baba. Noting the absence of a garland in his own hand, Rege felt mortified. Baba at once knew his hear, and lifted up a bundle of garlands in his hands, and told Rege, 'All these are yours.'

Rege, on account of his great love for Baba, did not mind spending Rs. 85/- on the purchase of a beautiful *muslin*, which when folded could be contained in one's hand. On a Ramanavami Day in 1916, all of Baba's devotees presented a piece of cloth each to Baba and got it back. But Rege, with his muslin inside his shirt, bowed to Baba, and stealthily thrust it under Baba's gaddi so that no one would notice it. he came back. When all the other clothes were presented and returned, Baba got up, and said, 'The *Gaddi* must be dusted. Remove it.' The muslin was there under it. Baba said, 'Whose is this? I am not going to return it. This is mine.' Baba took it up, looked at Rege, spread out the *muslin*, put it over his shoulders, and asked Rege, 'Do I not look nice in this!' That was just what Rege wanted him to do, namely, to keep it – as there was no difference between Rege and Baba. his identity with the Guru was established in this practical way.

In another way also Baba granted this identity. This was in about 1916. Rege had gone to Shirdi and was staying with Ayi. when Baba was alone, he sent for him, and said, 'The key of my treasury is now placed in your hands. Ask anything you want, Rs. 5, Rs. 100 or what you like. I will give it to you.' This was a temptation, but Rege declined to ask for anything. Sai Baba knew what was necessary, good or useful for Rege and it was for Baba to decide what to give or what to withhold, and not for Rege to ask. So, Rege would not ask. Then Baba held him by the chin and coaxed him to ask for something, because he

LIFE OF SAI BABA

was anxious to give. Then Rege said, 'Is it agreed, Baba, that you grant anything I ask for?'. 'Yes', Baba answered. Rege said, 'Then Baba I want this. In this and in any future birth that may befall me, you should never part from me. You should always be with me'. Baba was full of joy and petting him said 'Yes, I shall be with you, inside you and outside you, whatever you may be or do' Rege felt then and feels even now, Baba is always with him. Baba also shows his form visibly to him occasionally to reassure him and guide him.

This statement that Baba is always with Rege, and Rege always with Baba, came from Sai Baba in a very forceful way again in 1916. on one occasion Baba showed his deep concern for M.B. Rege's comfort and happiness. It was about a child that was the first child that Rege had. when in 1914 a child was still in the womb, both Rege and his wife went to Baba for darshan. then Baba cryptically said, 'You have got one of my gifts with you.' When the child was born, it was taken to Baba. Baba then caressed it, and asked Rege, 'Is the child yours or mine?' 'Yours Baba,' replied Rege. Then Baba said, 'Keep him with you as a charge from me.' One might wonder, with what object this was said. Baba fully knew what the future of that child was to be and how it was to leave Rege and cause him much pain, being his very first child. A year and half after that, the child got pneumonia, and the doctors were saying that the danger was over. But just then it started sinking. Rege took the child to the prayer room in his house and prayed to Baba. 'The child is yours, Baba. So, please take it and give it rest in you. But having given it its worldly existence, I undertake all its *karma*', said Rege. Then Rege put his palm on the head of the child. There was a smile on its face, a last gasp and the crown of the head was drawn in with a hiss, just the way in which the yogis lives would depart, namely, through the crown of the head. To confirm his idea that the child had sadgati, he had an experience, a couple of months later, when he went to Shirdi. as he was in Baba's presence, the latter asked some one, 'Who is this man? where does he live?' pointing to Rege. They said, 'This is Rege and he lives at Indore.' 'No,' said Baba, 'You are wrong. he is always here and I am with him.' Next Baba asked , 'Has he any children?' The person present said, 'No Baba; his child has just now died.' Baba retorted, 'Died? No, no. I will tell you what happened. The child was mine, and this man agreed to keep it. One day he said, 'You keep him with you, and I will take up his karma.' So, I took the child and kept it here, pointing to his heart'. Baba added, 'He shall be here eternally'. Eternal with Guru – God means undoubted sadgati. That is how Baba tried to fore-warn Rege from the beginning about this loss of his first child and how he consoled him by giving the child sadgati. This being a memorable

LIFE OF SAI BABA

event is referred to in Sai Sahasranama in the following words: *Rege Sisoh Tathandasya Sada Sadgati Dayakah.*

As for worldly matters, naturally in the position of a judge, he did not have much trouble, though on account of his increasing family burdens, he had demands and burdens. But Rege never troubled Baba with prayers for worldly gain or support, for instance, as in matters of promotion. He had his income from property and insurance. He was quite content with the provision for the present and the future. If need arose, somehow money was coming in, and Rege had nothing to complain of.

Baba's kindness and provision for Rege's welfare had no limit. Rege says that it is not possible to give out all his experiences, but about Baba's method of communication, he gives a classification. There are three forms. The first is in the active waking stage. When the sishya is in difficulties or Baba wants his sishya to take a particular course, the sishya gets an inspiration as to what course should be adopted and the feeling that it is Baba's inspiration. that is quite enough and it is verified by the events in his own case. When he was at Ayi's house, he would feel that Baba called him, and would go up to the Mosque and find that Baba was actually waiting for him there. So, the inspiration really came from Baba. Baba would give him some songs to sing or some tunes, because both Baba and Rege knew music.

The second relate to the sleeping or trance state. Baba would appear in dreams or trances. This would be called Sakshatkara and is considered most impressive and unmistakable. Of course Rege had Baba's Sakshatkaras. In the third method, Baba directed his sishya to go to some other person, who did not even know why the sishya was sent, but who nevertheless benefitted the sishya in accordance with Baba's internal and unperceived guidance. Sometimes the person to whom Baba sends a devotee is totally unfit to give any reply, for instance, the rustic girl to whom Das Ganu was sent for interpreting the Isa Upanishad. Mr. Rege tells of how he was sent to several persons in the year 1912. He had taken Rs. 100 with him in his pocket to Shirdi. Baba asked for dakshina of Rs. 40/= first, again Rs. 40/= and again the balance Rs. 20/=. then once again, he asked dakshina, and when Rege said he had no more left, Baba said, "Go and get it". "From whom?" asked Rege. The answer was "From Shama", a woefully poor man. When Rege went to Shama and told him that Baba wanted dakshina to be taken from him, Shama replied, "You do not understand Baba." Baba smiled and said, "Go and ask Kaka". So, he went to H. S. Dixit. Dixit said he had no cash and that Baba's direction

LIFE OF SAI BABA

must be understood as a lesson that Rege should not feel being poor or begging for money or asking for anything else, to be a humiliation, "Do not feel it to be infra dig to do anything for the Master" he said. Dixit said that Rege should never esteem himself to be above begging. So, Rege went back and reported to Baba. Again Baba smiled and said, "Go to Nana". Rege went to N. G. Chandorkar at the Khandoba's temple where he was reading religious books with the learned Upasani Sastri. Chandorkar then sketched out plans and schemes and showed how he himself arranged to bring a lump sum, left one half of it at Kopergaon, went on giving dakshina after dakshina, and at the opportune moment sent for his reserve in Kopergaon. Chandorkar in his worldly wisdom said, "You must act like that". Rege reported this to Baba. Baba sent for Nana Chandorkar and first asked for Rs. 40, again for Re. 40, and again for the balance of Rs. 20. Immediately he asked for another Rs. 20 before the Kopergaon reserve would come. Thus Nana was taught a lesson that it was a presumption on his part to support that he was the great Providence supplying the needs of Baba, which was impression he had. So, Baba showed how differently demands for dakshina were interpreted by different devotees. Rege concludes that the object of the whole proceeding was to teach lessons to him and to Chandorkar. Baba really cared nothing at all for money or for presents and wanted only love, deep, intense, passionate and whole-hearted love.

Then Rege mentions Baba's religious views and how he was perfectly impartial and conservative, asking all people to keep their own religions and not to interfere with others religions. in that connection, he mentioned how in 1916, a Rohilla had come and was loudly reciting the Koran at night. He was very pious and had high regard for the attainments of Baba and treated him as Paigambar, that is, as a prophet. he showed Baba great reverence. Yet, he objected to Baba's heterodox doctrines and practices, for instance, allowing the din of the arati with its music in the mosque, allowing himself to be worshipped as God, and his partaking of food offered to idols who were devils in the Rohilla's view. Baba laughed. So, the Rohilla was extremely perplexed. But he was swayed by texts which declared that heterodoxy, even in the highest, should be punished with death. He resolved suddenly that Baba should be killed in spite of his being a Paigambar. One day he walked behind Sai Baba carrying a huge club and had raised it with a view to end Baba and his heterodoxy together. Suddenly Baba turned back and fixed him with a glance and touched his left wrist. At once the Rohilla cowered and sank like a lump of lead. He was not able to lift up either himself or the club. This man later left Shirdi for good. Baba would not allow the Hindus to interfere with his

LIFE OF SAI BABA

loud recitals of Koran at night disturbing the sleep of all people around. Baba would not allow interference with the Rohilla in his religious practice nor would he allow the Rohilla to interfere with the Hindus' religious practice. Baba discountenanced intolerance in every class and in every person. To Baba, Vittal and Allah were one and all saints were the same.

When Avaste felt that there was *Gurudroha* in going from one saint to another. Baba held just the opposite view. Baba declared that he was in the other saints, and the other saints declared that they were in Baba and asked their devotees to go to Baba. For instance, Akkalkote Maharaj in about 1876 asked his devotees to go to Baba. Baba referring to a number of saints showed his reverence to or oneness with them. He referred to Madhavanath Maharaj of Devgam as his brother. Also he referred to Silanath Maharaj of Dewas as his brother. He referred to Tajuddin Baba of Nagpur also in a similar manner. On account of such reference, Rege viewed them as the same soul, and they all showed, one after another, after Baba's *Mahasamadhi*, that he, as Baba's child was quite welcome to them. he had similar experience even in the case of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, when he went to Dakshineswar. In 1923, Rege met Madhavanath Maharaj and, at very first meeting, the Maharaj told Rege, 'You are a Sai Baba man'. He further narrated the exact words that passed between Rege and Baba at the first interview in the Masjid. Madhavanath added, 'I was then present', which must of course be as Sai Baba or in the invisible spirit form.

In 1923, Rege went to Nagpur to take a darshan of Tajuddin Baba. His darshan was a very difficult matter, because Tajuddin lived in the harem of a Hindu Raja. Large crowds were waiting in a garden to take his darshan. Rege also was in the crowd. But as he had to take a train at 4 p.m. that day, he determined to wait only till 3 p.m. After waiting for long, just when it was a few minutes to 3, a man came up and said to Rege that Tajuddin Baba wanted him. He had his darshan for ten minutes and his blessings, and then returned. Then probably about that time, Silanath Maharaj was camping somewhere, Mr. Rege went up there and paid his respects. Because he was only in camp, Rege suggested that he might go to Rege's house. Immediately, the Maharaj agreed and came to Rege's house, and went straight to where Baba's photo was and bowed before Baba. Maharaj would not take sweets or fruits, but only wanted tea. He took some tea, and what remained of it he offered to Rege who gladly took it.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

A similar experience of identity of other saints with Baba, Rege had when he visited Sri Kesavanandaji of Saikheda and Sri Baba Jan of Poona. The moment each one of them saw him, the saint said, 'This is Baba's child'. Lastly about Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Mr. Rege mentions his experience. It was in 1928 he went to Dakshineswar and wanted to go round and see all things connected with the Paramahansa. he wanted his guide to show him Ramlala with which Ramakrishna played. The guide pointed to a huge figure and said it was Ramlala. Rege protested that it could not be. But the guide said, 'I am the local man and you are a stranger. I know better.' Just at this juncture, a pujari of the temple turned up and said that he had a dream overnight that a deccani bhakta was coming and that he should show him all round. He took Rege to the real Ramlala and showed him all round. he also took him to the Holy of Holiness of Kali and said that Rege could touch the image and worship the image of Kali and Ramlala just as he liked. So, by Baba's grace, Rege had good darshan and all round and everywhere he felt that Sai Baba was the same as the other saints that he saw.

Now the most important benefit one can have from knowing Mr. Rege's life and experience is the benefit the reader himself can have from Baba. Rege says,

"Finally if I am asked what I would suggest to one who wished to find out how he, not having met Sai Baba in the flesh could make himself a devotee of Sai Baba and get his help, my answer will be that he should sit wholeheartedly and try to pour his heart in love to Sai Baba. it is not essential that he should go to Shirdi for that purpose – though Shirdi associations are undoubtedly helpful. All that he should do is to transcend the senses and concentrate with love on Sai Baba. he would surely reach and obtain the help of Sai Baba – to obtain all that he is fit to achieve or receive."

RAO BAHADUR S. B. DHUMAL

S. B. Dhumal may be cited as one of the most ardent bhaktas of Sai Baba, who surrendered himself entirely to Baba with the fullest confidence. He acted in very important matters, official and professional, with full trust in Baba for the success of his efforts. He was a mofussil Pleader, practicing at Nasik and was in fairly prosperous circumstances when he first heard about Sai Baba in 1907, this is, at the age of 34. Even at his very first visit, he was greatly impressed with Baba. His outstanding service to the Sai Sansthan and the Sai-minded public was that he introduced Sriman Gopal Rao Buty, a millionaire of Nagpur to Baba. As soon as he took Buty to Baba, Buty also becomes a devoted follower of Baba. The best remembered and the most memorable service of Buty to the cause of Baba is that he erected a huge stone building called after his name, Buty Wada, and devoted it entirely for the Mahasamadhi shrine of Baba. Baba's Samadhi shrine is in the centre of that house, and all outlaying parts are used as accession thereto. This building must have cost a lakh of rupees.

From 1907 onwards S. B. Dhumal paid repeated visits to Baba and got into contact with him in every conceivable matter. When asked about his experiences, he said, "It is difficult for me to sort out in what matter I am having experiences. Every act of mine, every event in my life, is moulded and directed by Him." He says the one memorable statement of Baba which is the basis of his contact – was Baba's telling him, "At every step of yours, I am taking care of you". Baba added, "If I did not, what will become of you, God knows". The occasion for that statement was very interesting. S. B. Dhumal was sleeping in his own

LIFE OF SAI BABA

quarters at Shirdi and in the morning, when he went to see Baba, the later remarked, "*Bhav*, the whole of last night I had no sleep." Dhumal asked, "Why so Baba?" Baba said, "I was thinking and thinking of you all night." S. B. Dhumal was for one thing a young man, full-blooded, with a good practice with plenty of funds and, was a widower without children. Therefore, the thoughts of a person in such a position would run riot and easily lead him astray so as to injure both body and soul. Baba had to look after his thoughts and control them. So, Baba said, "If I do not do so, God knows what will happen to you". Dhumal had certain physical ailments, which also rendered a bachelor's life very necessary and important from the point of view of his welfare. After his wife's death in 1909, his father-in-law, Rao Bahadur Kinkhede, wanted him to marry again and noting that unless Baba gave permission, Dhumal would never agree, he went to Baba. As he approached Baba, Baba's eyes sparkled with anger showing how determined Baba was to repel the idea of marriage. So, he came back and reported that Baba was distinctly against any marriage for S. B. Dhumal.

Baba's love for Dhumal was very great and covered both his temporal and spiritual welfare. Numerous instances throughout his life bear out this proposition. In point of fact, his contact with Baba was right through all the hours of the day and night and all the days of the year. Dhumal says, "There is no incident or event in my life which I do not connect with Baba, however trivial it may appear to be. I firmly believe that everything in my life is swayed by Baba." Dhumal adds that he does not care whether the outside world believes it or not. However, noting that B. V. N. Swami was not a disbeliever, he narrated to him many instances of his life, showing how Baba dealt with him and also gave some hints which may be useful for an earnest reader in trying to get more out of Baba. The best way of understanding Baba is to experience him oneself, he says. "Where is Baba gone? He is still alive and active." This, S. B. Dhumal said in October 1936 and added, "Baba is more active, if that were possible, than he was before *Mahasamadhi*." Anyone in downright earnest can get in touch with him today and at once. But if one will not do that, but wants only second-hand, third-hand or fifth-hand experience, one will get poor stuff. He said, "Experiences get their significance and full force only when uttered in one's mother tongue and face to face and not when put into English and transmitted to the reader through cold print. With this preface, he began narrating some very interesting instances of faith in Baba, being a living and very fruitful faith for the success of his life, chiefly temporal. Chiefly temporal is emphasized here, for many readers are in Dhumal's condition, that is, they are 95 per cent

LIFE OF SAI BABA

worldly; and hardly 5 per cent of their time and attention is for things beyond – except of course when using such a divine personality like Sai Baba as a means for achieving all that they want. That, of course, is based upon love, regard and deep attachment. Dhumal had such love, regard and deep attachment to Baba. Baba's purpose and object were to develop that attachment – for the Guru is the only sadhana and becomes a powerful sadhana when the attachment and faith in him are at their height. That is Nishta. To develop Nishta it was that Baba revealed to him what a deep interest he had in Dhumal, and how he was watching him all the night at the sacrifice of his own health and comfort. S. B. Dhumal says, "At this declaration, I was overpowered by a sudden gush of love, gratitude and surprise, feeling which could find no other expression than a free flow of tears. What intense love he had for me! What an amount of trouble he took for my sake! Just as I was always thinking of him. He was kind enough to think of me with this difference. My thought of him, though loving, was weak, and I could render him no real service. But his love was accompanied by such vast insight and such power that I was helped in every act and event." Dhumal found that Baba could and did foresee things far ahead and took every step required to avert the evil and promote the good that was coming to him. There were numerous instances to show this. Only a few of them will be given:

Even from Nasik, Dhumal would write to Shama at Shirdi, in order to be in touch with Baba, as Shama would read all letters to Baba and communicate his replies. But very often, even during Baba's life in the flesh and in every case after Baba's *Mahasamadhi*. Dhumal addressed his queries to Baba mentally or by placing chits prayerfully that is, casting lots before Baba's portrait and invariably the answer he got showed Dhumal what was the correct and safe course to follow. Invariably Dhumal followed that advice. Though persons with commonsense, medical opinion, and prudence objected, still Dhumal followed Baba's advice and invariably discovered that he had followed the right path, the safest and wisest. Dhumal takes up his health first. At Nasik, his ancestral place, plague broke out once. Dead rats were found in the house. Dhumal wrote to Shirdi for permission before he would move out and left the house as soon as the reply was received that he could vacate. Being always under Baba's protection, he felt perfectly safe in remaining till the reply came, as Baba has said, "At every step I am guiding you". So, with fullest knowledge of Baba's powers and love and with implicit reliance on the truth of Baba's words, he remained boldly in the midst of plague until and unless Baba ordered him out. Baba knew everything that was happening every moment and everywhere. Whether it is at Nasik or at any other place,

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Baba would never allow any harm to befall Dhumal, as he had placed this child-like trust and entire reliance on Baba. In the 29 years of such reliance, that is, from 1907 to 1936, there was not a single instance where Baba's protection failed or the trust was found misplaced. When he got Baba's reply that he could move to a bungalow at Nasik, he moved. In the very same night that he occupied the bungalow, a dead rat was found. At once, Dhumal wrote to Baba whether he should move away. The answer was in the negative and he did not move. The health authorities and neighbours had contempt for him for violating the rules of prudence. But what was the result? The result always justified his implicit faith in following the guidance of Baba. He continued to stay in the bungalow. Later dead rats were found in his servants quarters, in the house of the neighbourhood and in the very bungalow from which alone all the water had to be drawn for cooking. Then, at once Dhumal wrote to Baba for permission to move and, being sure that the reply would arrive, he started packing up things and carrying them off to go to his house in Bazaar street. When he was there trying to unlock the front door, the postman handed over a letter from Shirdi which ran as follows: Why should we give up our residence? At once, he turned back and went to the bungalow and boldly lived there, taking care to avoid only the infected water of the well where the dead rat had been found. He got all his water from Godavari. No harm came to him by his occupation of the bungalow that Baba had made him stay in, while all round there were 14 to 15 deaths due to plague per day at Nasik.

Baba's help to him and to his family included certain spiritual affairs also. He lost his wife in 1909 and was going on doing *Masik Shraaddha* for her at Nasik. Baba communicated through Shama's letter, "You do your *Masik* here at Shirdi, and I will give your wife sadgati." So, Dhumal went to Shirdi and performed *Masik* there. Baba only asked for Rs. 15 as dakshina and Dhumal gave it. As Baba assured him that his wife got sadgati, Dhumal believed it and every Sai bhakta believes it because Sai Rama has said in Rama's words,

*Anritam Noktapurvam me
Nacha Vakshye Kadachana.*

this means, Untruth I have never uttered before. Nor will I utter at any time. Baba said, "Sitting in this *Masjid* no words of untruth are uttered by Me. Is this a place for uttering lies?" asked Baba. Also in the case of Upasani Maharaj's wife who died in January 1912, it will be remembered that Baba had said that her spirit had come to Him. That means, Baba had given her *satgati*, because Baba is God.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

However, Dhumal sought and obtained Baba's help frequently, mostly for temporal and professional matters. Several of them are interesting and so they may be set forth here. About his own profession, the Public Prosecutorship at Nasik was offered to him when he was quite prosperous. Dhumal wrote to Shama to consult Baba. The reply came from Baba saying, "Why accept the new? The old is quite good." So, he did not accept it. His practice was flourishing and he was not a loser by not accepting the Public Prosecutorship. He appealed to Baba in professional matters also and followed the directions of Baba in such matters. There was a case of grievous hurt in which three brothers were convicted. An opponent of theirs had a bone broken and the injured man had been attended to by a medical man who was not a qualified or certified doctor, being kept in his private nursing home for over 20 days. When Dhumal went up with his appeal memo and bail application, the Sessions Judge, a senior European Officer remarked, "The case looks strong. I am not going to allow bail." At once Dhumal thought of Baba and turned to the Judge. He told the Judge, "The evidence of a bone having been broken is that of an unqualified person, a quack and the prosecution evidence is interested and unreliable. The appellants are all agriculturists and the only workers in their homes. If they are all in jail, their farms would perish." At once the Judge allowed bail. When the case came up for argument, the Public Prosecutor wanted S. B. Dhumal not to argue on merits but to simply ask for clemency, in which case he would not oppose. But S. B. Dhumal made up his mind to argue on merits, and finally wound up by asking for a reduction of the sentence. The Judge said, "For reduction of sentence, so much time need not have been taken." When Public Prosecutor argued, the Judge asked how the grievous hurt could be made, as the opinion about the breakage of the bone was that of a quack and not that of a qualified doctor. The Public Prosecutor replied, "The injured man had been in the hospital for about 20 days". The Judge sharply answered, "You can argue that before a Third Class Magistrate and not before me." The Public Prosecutor collapsed with that remark and did not argue any further. The appellants were acquitted.

Another professional matter was still more interesting. Baba's servant Reghu and five others were convicted and imprisoned on a charge of outraging the modesty of a *Marwadi* woman and Raghu was crying out in jail at Ahmednagar. Baba appeared to him and said. 'I will see you freed'. Next day Tatyia Patil brought the appeal papers to Baba after shown having them to some senior lawyers, who found that the conviction was based upon six eye witnesses. They considered it

LIFE OF SAI BABA

hopeless. Tatya took the papers to Bhav, Bhav means S. B. Dhumal at Nasik. When Tatya brought papers, Dhumal looked them up and told him, "there are so many seniors above me. Why don't you take to Ahmednagar". But Tatya replied, 'Baba said that you should present the appeal', and that settled the course. At once Dhumal drew up an appeal memo and went to the District Magistrate of Ahmednagar at his bungalow. The District Magistrate asked him, 'What is it about?' Then Dhumal mentioned that it was a conviction for outraging a Marwadi woman's modesty on the testimony of six eye witnesses. The Magistrate remarked, 'It seems a very strong case'. At once Baba's modus operandi was seen. Dhumal said, 'Why six eye witnesses, Your Honour? You can get sixty eye witnesses in a fraction ridden village like Shirdi'. the Magistrate said, 'Do you think so?' Dhumal replied, 'Think! Why, I am more than sure of it.' When the words were being uttered through the mouth of Dhumal, the mind of Magistrate was being operated upon, and so he said, 'If so, I acquit all your appellants'. The Magistrate had not called for the papers from the lower court, nor read the judgement nor appeal memo, but simply said, 'Hand over the appeal memo to me and tell me the facts you are relying upon'. Dhumal practically dictated the appellate court judgement. The magistrate, a senior European officer simply wrote it out, and at once acquitted the appellants. The Magistrate then asked Dhumal, 'Is Sai Baba of yours a Hindu or Muslim?', showing that all the while it was Sai Baba who was operating on his mind. Dhumal answered, 'Neither the one nor the other. He is above both'. What does he teach was the next question of the Magistrate. Dhumal was up to the occasion. He said, 'You must go to him yourself to know that'. 'Can I go?' asked the Magistrate. Dhumal replied, 'Yes, you can certainly go'. The Magistrate had an idea of going to Shirdi some time later, but subsequently dropped the matter. So it was only for the nonce he felt interested in Shirdi. Meanwhile, Dhumal without any surety was taken Raghu and other five with him to Shirdi. That was the time when poor Dixit's daughter died there and people were going to attend the cremation. Baba called some of them and said, 'Don't go, I will show you some chamatkar'. Shortly thereafter the appellants arrived. Then the people learnt how the senior District Magistrate acquitted the appellants straightway without hearing the other side or without sending for the papers and realised that this was the chamatkar. This is *Manasthambam*. Baba had gripped the mind of District Magistrate and made him deal out summary justice for the weird and great saint's servants.

In respect of Dhumal's further progress in life, Baba looked after him after his *Mahasamadhi* quite as well as he did before. Dhumal was the

LIFE OF SAI BABA

first nominated President of the Nasik District Board from 1917-25. As President he had to sign papers, thousands in number, without using facsimile. This took many hours of the day and that reduced his practice as well as the income tax he had to pay. But he got the Sanad of Rao Bahadur in recognition of his service. This was in 1927. But one of the peculiar happenings during the time when he was the District Board President is worthy of notice. Each night, a peon would stand with papers, and after his signing each one, the peon would blot each paper, so that the next one might be ready for signature. One day when these papers were with him, some visitor, for whom he had very high regard, came and talked on till midnight. So, the signatures had to be postponed. Early morning he had to run away for a case and returned only at night. Then, he called for the papers of the previous day and that day. The Head Clerk came and asked him, 'Why did you send for the papers of the previous day?'. Dhumal said that he had not signed them. Then the head Clerk showed, to the astonishment of Dhumal, that all the previous day's papers bore his signatures. Dhumal wondered at the miracle done by Baba.

We shall give another instance, Sri Gopal Rao Buty of Nagpur, a mill owner, was anxious to help Dhumal and wanted to send him to England. He said that he would provide for the expenses of Dhumal's journey and the support of Dhumal's family during his absence in England. All these had been settled between them, and when Shama went to ask Baba whether Bhav, that is Dhumal, was to be sent to Bilayat, Baba asked, "What for?" Shama said, "To study for the Bar." Baba said, "No." His *Hayat* and *Vilayat* are not in *Bilayat* but in this country". Therefore, Dhumal did not go to England, but his practice was not the worst for it.

It was in 1912 that he underwent an operation under chloroform. It was risky but before the chloroform began to operate he saw Baba seated on a chair near his head and he took courage. Baba is there to look after me, he thought. The operation was a perfect success.

In some private matters such as when he attended to the health of his brother's wife at Poona, Baba decided for him in a most mysterious way. he started from Nasik to go to Poona, where the sick lady was, with Rs. 80 in his pocket to cover expenses of the journey and contingent expenditure. But as Shirdi being en route, he stopped there. Baba took from him, as dakshina, all the eighty Rupees and kept him for three days with him. Then, when he asked for leave, Baba said, "We will see." After the third day, a telegram came from Poona saying that the lady had died. It is only after this that Baba gave him

LIFE OF SAI BABA

leave to go. It was clear that Baba could foresee the end of the lady and the uselessness of Dhumal's visit. Anyhow, that was the year in which Baba passed away and Dhumal had the precious opportunity of spending three days with him.

After Baba passed away, Dhumal accepted the Revenue Membership of the Dewar State, and was also the Karbari of Sarguna State from 1932-33. When he was in the Sarguna State, the Chief of the State visited him and walked into his room, where he was dining at a table. Dhumal then apologised for his inability to leave the table and accord proper reception, but the Chief had walked into the next room from where Dhumal sat, Saw Baba's portrait hanging on the wall, came back to the room, and announced at once, "Your pay is increased by Rs. 50." Dhumal had never asked for it. This grant within a fortnight of his appointment, and without any effort on his part, must have been only by Baba's influence.

Mantiche Chitta Lekurache Hita

that is, the child's welfare is the mother's care.

Dhumal was casting chits after Baba's Mahasamadhi to ascertain Baba's orders. When Baba was in the flesh, he had got a coloured painted picture of Baba, and as he was passing by *Dwarakamayee* carrying the picture, Baba asked him, "What is it?" Dhumal said, "You are here." Baba asked for it, took it, kept it for a while, gazed at it in the front and at the back, and returned it to him saying "Keep it". This was the very thing, which he was anxious to get – a portrait of Baba for worship, blessed by having been in his hands. That is the very picture in which Baba is standing in a pensive or meditative mood, indicative of his words, "Bhav, I had no sleep all night due to thinking of you." Baba gave him many coins, each time taking dakshina of Rs. 2/- and returning it, saying,

Japoon Teva Konala Devunnako Kars Karun Nako

that is, Preserve these carefully. Do not give it to anyone nor spend it. He gave him Rs. 2, then Rs. 20 on one occasion, Rs. 50 on another occasion, and Rs. 30 on some other occasion. By these gifts, he had a total sum of Rs. 69. These Dhumal treated as charmed coins that carry luck with them or, as they call them, Mascots. Baba asked Buty for dakshina of Rs. 20. Buty gave it. Then Baba asked him again for Rs. 20 dakshina, and latter Rs. 20 he gave to Dhumal. On one occasion he got Rs. 30 from Buty and took the money. The he shook the coins in

LIFE OF SAI BABA

both his hands and divided them roughly into each hand one part in each hand, and gave one part to Dhumal. Each had exactly Rs. 15. Baba not only gave but also took.

Datati Prathigrinnathi,

that is, giving and receiving are signs of life. Baba acts sometimes,

*Yesya Anugraham Ichyami
Tasye Sarvam Harami Aham*

Baba sometimes took away by asking for dakshina the entire contents of Dhumal's pockets, leaving him penniless. But Dhumal neither regretted it nor had fear, for it was Baba who gave him and Baba who took and He never failed to provide. His reasons for taking dakshina are clear. When Dhumal had gone to Ahmednagar to Reghu's appeal, the parties paid him Rs. 300. When Dhumal came before Baba, Baba asked him for dakshina over and over again till his Rs. 300 was completely paid out because, the whole thing was due to Baba's *chamatkar*, and so, he must not receive or, at any rate, retain any fee given for that.

Kaka Saheb H. S. Dixit has communicated some of his experiences to Dhumal, and Dhumal mentions how Baba helped Dixit even after His Mahasamadhi. The incident is about Rs. 30,000 given to Dixit. This showed Dixit's absolute reliance on Baba as his supporter. Rs. 30,000 is a very big sum, and Dixit's resources had all been whittled down to zero and he could not easily get such a large sum from any one. It was only Baba's supreme power of control over minds that could produce the sum of Rs. 30,000, which was brought to his office table just in time to pay off his creditors.

Another incident mentioned by Dixit is the provision for Dixit's younger brother Sadasiva for the position of bank officer for the Cutch State on Rs. 1,000 a month, when there was absolutely no hope of Sadasiva earning a pie. But Dixit had cast chits before Baba, about whether to keep Sadasiva at Bombay or not and Baba's answer on the chit was, 'Keep him at Bombay'. But at Bombay, Sadasiva could not practice. Instead of practice, he got this post at the bank.

Throughout his life, Dhumal benefited greatly in temporal affairs and he held a high position at Nasik. Consequently he was on the Sai Sansthan Committee and acted as its trustee up to his death. so, Dhumal's life is an excellent instance of Baba's giving full temporal and

LIFE OF SAI BABA

spiritual support to all those that place implicit reliance on him. Baba's spiritual help in his case was to provide sadgati for his wife, and fairly good end for himself because Baba had kept him pure and full of Nishta or faith in the Guru.

H. V. SATHE

Rao Bahadur Hari Vinayak Sathe was a Deputy Collector and a Settlement Officer in the Bombay Presidency. He was long remembered for his first great service to Baba's faith by building the first chatram or chavadi so to speak at Shirdi. He put it up in the year 1905-06. Baba's fame had already spread abroad considerably and people having to visit Baba could not get accommodation in the very few hovels and houses there, and had often to stay under trees. So, Sathe's wada served as a great comfort and help to people in their Shirdi pilgrimage to see Baba. His second great service was the beginning of congregational worship by Baba's followers, as he had provided the first *pujari* who conducted the congregational worship of all. That *pujari's* name was Meghashyam known as Megha. Hence, we shall try to describe Sathe's contact with Baba, how it began, how it developed and what important information Sathe gave others in respect of help from Baba.

The most noticeable feature about Sathe was that at the age of fifty he married again after the loss of his wife. He had lost his wife some four or five years earlier, and she had left him only daughters and no sons. Every Hindu feels that unless he has a son, his spiritual position is unsafe. Sathe was anxious therefore to have a son, but there was no guarantee that the second wife would get any sons and not more daughters. So, he declared to his importunate friends who asked him to marry that if any great saint should advice him, he would do so. In 1904, he was Deputy Collector at Ahmednagar. He went down to Kopergaon, where Mr. Bharva was the *mamlatdar* and Mr. Bharva told

LIFE OF SAI BABA

him that Sai Baba living at Shirdi within Kopergaon taluk was a very great saint. So, both of them went in 1904 to see Sai Baba at the Mosque. After seeing Baba, H. V. Sathe came out without putting him any question. But Mr. Bharva told Baba, "Saheb has no son", then Baba replied, "*Shadi Karega to Allah Bachcha Dega*", that is, if he married, God will give him a son. As he stood in front of the Mosque, these words were heard by H. V. Sathe. Then, the question was about the bride. There was also the question of confirmation of Baba's view. Sathe was orthodox and considered it necessary to get an able astrologer. There was one who had arrived at Poona to read his horoscope and find out whether Baba's statement was corroborated by a reading of the horoscope. When the astrologer looked into his horoscope, he declared that Sathe was to have male progeny only after his fiftieth year, that is, after 1905. So, Sathe was confirmed in the idea of marriage. Ganesh Damodar Kelkar had a daughter for marriage and he wrote to Sathe, when he was at Ahmednagar, asking him whether there was any bridegroom to suit his daughter. Thinking this was a feeler Sathe sent the reply, 'There is no bridegroom here, but if you are thinking of me, carefully consider all the pros and cons and let me have your views'. So, Ganesh Damodar Kelkar offered his girl and after the girl was taken to Baba at the instance of Sathe, Baba put *kumkum* on her forehead and said, Send the girl to Ahmedabad. So, in 1906 H. V. Sathe married Dada Kelkar's daughter. But the first two children were girls. Dada Kelkar went to Baba saying, "When are we to have a grandson". Baba's reply was, "I am requesting Allah. He will comply with my request." So, in 1912 a grandson was born, hale and healthy and now represents the family at Poona. This marriage and providing a son was considered the principle service of Baba to Sathe. About Sathe's own service to Baba, he wanted to put up a house or wada at Shirdi where his father-in-law Dada Kelkar should live and where other pilgrims could lodge when they visited Shirdi. When he was thinking so, Baba told him, "Pull down the village wall and build". Sathe thought that he was asked to erect a wall around the whole village, and that would involve an immense cost at which he was frightened. But soon he found that Baba's proposal was that a small site near the crumbling remnants of the village wall should be taken up by him, and that he should put up a building including the village wall. And this was done. Baba also pointed out that his building would include the gode neem tree, where Baba's *Guru's* tomb is situated. So, Sathe bought the land and used the remnants of the village wall to put up a wada enclosing and surrounding the margosa tree. Baba told him that close to the tree, was his *Guru's* tomb, and so in putting up a wall for wada, a niche was to be provided over that *Guru's* tomb and in the niche Baba's *Guru* was to be worshipped. Baba

LIFE OF SAI BABA

gave the name of his *Guru*, and Sathe thought it ended with a Shah or Sa. But elsewhere the information is given that Baba said that his *Guru* was Kabir. Some people think that this may be Kabir's tomb. Kabir of course did not live and die at Shirdi but only at Benaras. But it is well known that his Hindu and Mohammedan followers had a dispute as to the disposal of his remains, and when they lifted up the cloth covering it, they discovered that it had turned into leaves and flowers. These leaves and flowers were taken to a number of places where tombs were erected over them, and it is believed by some that under the said margosa tree some of the leaves representing Kabir's body might have been buried. Sathe himself went and resided at Shirdi for some time. Baba's *arati* and *puja* had begun about the beginning of century, with the *arati* song modeled on the lines of the Pandharpur *puja* and approved by Nana Saheb Chandorkar. When Bapugir Ramgir Gosavi took some udhi to Jamner for Minatai's delivery he took the *arati* song for Chandorkar's approval around 1900 or 1904. There was no special celebration of *Guru Poornima*, and each person worshipped separately with that arati song. There was no congregational worship. As for *Guru Poonima* Baba told Dada Kelkar on a *Guru Poornima* day, Don't you know that this is a Guru Poornima Day? Come with your worship materials and do your *Guru Pooja*. So, from that day, every year Gurupooja is being conducted by all devotees at Shirdi. And still, at other times, it was individual *puja* alone. It developed into congregational puja when H. V. Sathe sent a Brahmin named Megha to Shirdi. Megha was a very peculiar orthodox Brahmin. He did not even know his *Gayathri*. But he did not wish to go near Muslim or have anything to do with the worship of Muslims. Sathe found him living at Viramgaon when he was the Deputy Collector there. He found Megha always repeating *Namas-Sivaya*. So, finding that he was sufficiently pious, Sathe taught him Sandhya and Gayathri and sent him to Broach to worship Siva there. After he did Siva worship at Broach, Sathe sent him to Shirdi telling him that Siva was in flesh and blood at Shirdi in the form of Sai Baba and gave him the necessary money. But at the Broach railway station, Megha learnt that Sai Baba was a Muslim and he was horrified. What? Have I to go and bow to a Muslim and pray? He thought. He requested Sathe not to send him to Shirdi. But Sathe insisted and gave him a letter to Dada Kelkar who, he said, would introduce him to Baba and make him understand Baba. But when Megha went to the Shirdi Mosque, Baba got angry and would not allow him to get into the Mosque. Baba said, "Kick out that rascal" and asked, "What a fool is this Saheb to send this man here?" Megha then went away to Triambak and worshipped Gangadareswarar for a year and half. He suffered there from severe pains in his abdomen. During that time he got faith in Baba and came back to Shirdi. Dada Kelkar

LIFE OF SAI BABA

interceded on his behalf and Baba allowed him to stay at Shirdi and worship him at the Mosque.

Baba's work on Megha was purely internal. Baba did not give any oral instruction at all. But by that internal change. Megha became the most remarkable bhakta of Sai Baba, whom he considered really as Siva. Megha, being a hardy man, would go to Godavari daily, which is locally called Ganga (5 miles away from Shirdi en route to Kopergaon station), bring Ganga water and pour it on the head of Siva, Siva being Sai Baba. Sri R. B. Purandhare, an *Ankita* of Baba, mentions here one *chamatkar* of Baba. In his anxiety to pour Ganga water on Baba, Megha had brought a whole pot. Baba told him, "Arre, the head it the chief thing," *sarvasya gatrasya sirah pradhanam*, "so put a few drops on the head and that will suffice". But the impetuosity of Megha's bhakti made him take up the whole pot and turn it upside down over the head of Baba. Strangely, not a drop of water fell on the body of Baba. The whole pot of water had fallen on the head without touching Baba's body. So, just as Siva had tied up Ganga in his own tuft, Baba also used his head for retaining and throwing away the water so as not to touch his body or cloths. Megha was treated by Baba very kindly and Baba suited himself to Megha's taste. As he specialized in Siva worship, Baba gave him a *Pindi* or lingam as we call it, that is, an elongated round stone which is worshipped as Siva, when placed in the hollow of another stone, which is called *yonis*. Somebody had brought a pindi to Baba, and Baba presented it to Megha and asked him to go on with its worship. This was installed in *Sathe wada*, and Megha worshipped the Siva linga there. Just immediately before this pindi came, Baba appeared in Megha's sleep and told him, "Draw up a *Trisul*" that is, Siva's Trident. Megha wondered how Baba's voice could be heard inside the wada. So, he went to the Mosque and asked Baba whether he gave the order. Baba said he did, and when asked how he could get entrance into the wada when door was bolted. Baba declared, "Bolted doors do not bar access to Me". Megha was also given a huge picture of Baba by H. S. Dixit to be placed by the side of his pindi so that he could worship the Siva linga together with Sai Baba's picture. Baba noting his peculiar idiosyncrasy to worship all the gods in the temples of the village, that is, Devi, Sani, Siva, Maruti and Khandoba, told him, "After worshipping all these, come and worship Me". Megha did so regularly. Megha was impressed with Baba's omnipresence, by his directions on some occasions. One day when he went to Khandoba's, Upasani Maharaj, who lived there, had bolted the door from within, and he could not enter into the temple and worship Khandoba. So he returned to Baba. Khandoba's temple is very long way off from Baba's Mosque and is not visible from there. When Megha

LIFE OF SAI BABA

went to worship Baba on that day, Baba told him, "You have not yet done worship at Khandoba's. If you go there now you will find the door open. Do the puja of Khandoba and then come here. Megha then went to Khandoba and saw the door open as stated by Baba. After doing that *puja*, he went to Sai Baba for *puja*.

Megha died in 1912 at Shirdi. Baba's appreciation was shown by his coming to the corpse and placing his hands over it saying, "This was a true devotee of mine". Baba bore the expenses of the funeral dinner and Kaka Saheb Dixit carried out his order.

About Sathe's other benefits from contact with Sai Baba, we may first mention that by Baba's direction and guidance, he had success in some of his official efforts. He had applied for pension, and the pension granted in the first instance was less by Rs. 50 than what it ought to have been. Then Sathe sent up petition to the Government protesting against the reduction. Baba asked Dhumal, who came to him for Rs. 50 *dakshina*. Dhumal pleaded that he did not have the money. Then Baba told him "Go to Saheb and ask for it." Dhumal went and asked, and Sathe was very glad at the demand for that was an indication to him that his petition then pending with government was successful. He gave the *dakshina*, and as he learnt subsequently it was on that very day the order on his petition was passed, for the grant of the extra Rs. 50 pension.

As for Sathe's religious position, there was nothing special in his attainment or attention to religious or spiritual matters, and he did not go to Baba for religious development. But Baba of his own kindness wanted to correct his errors and train him alright. For instance, on one occasion when he was at Shirdi, his thoughts got loose and he went to visit the house of a lady who had a very doubtful reputation. Before going there, he paid his respects to Baba. Baba asked him, "Have you been to *Sala*?" (meaning that lady's residence) Then Sathe answered, "You have made me Deputy Collector. Would I have become that unless I went to school?" Baba, finding that he mistook his meaning, kept quiet. Later in the day, he visited that lady. There behind a close door or partly closed door, he was carrying on a conversation which would soon have hurled him into spiritual ruin. But suddenly the door was flung open, and at the threshold stood Baba, who waved his arms and made gestures to Sathe telling him, "What? You have come all the way to your *Guru* and you are descending to hell." Well, at once, like a thief caught in the act, Sathe repented. Baba disappeared and Sathe left that *Sala* and never visited her again. Thus, his purity was saved by Baba.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

On another occasion, he had similar help. He had purchased a land near about Shirdi and wanted to go and see it. He had ordered a cart, and his wife promised to go with him to see the land. But unfortunately his agnatic cousin, Babu, had lived there and died recently. Dada Kelkar thinking that if Baba's widow should come to know about the purchase of the land, there might be claims and trouble and so told his daughter who was Sathe's wife not to go and see the land. So, the lady when asked to get into the cart declined. Sathe was full of wrath. He pulled out the stick from the cart man, and was going to belabour his wife when lo! Megha came rushing in and told him, "Baba wants you". Down came the stick and he went to Baba. Baba told him, "What has happened? Your land is there. Why should you go and see it? He found that Baba was keeping a watch over him, whether he was in the act of cruelty to his wife or in danger of immoral relations with some woman. But Baba did not carry his spiritual instruction in the case of Sathe very far, because though he was fairly orthodox and moral, was hardly competent to take any serious steps in the purely spiritual line. He was very worldly-minded and what he was thinking of most was his position with the Government and later his financial position.

From the very beginning, Sathe's appreciation of Baba was somewhat defective. When Baba said that he was going to have a son if married, he wanted confirmation from a famous astrologer about the correctness of Baba's prediction. Then again on other matters also, he was not sufficiently attentive to Baba's wishes. On one occasion, for instance, he held a feast for which he invited everybody except his father-in-law with whom he had differences. When he went to invite Baba, Baba wished to rebuke him for harbouring such feelings of hatred. Baba said when he came in 'Fetch a stick', Sathe stood quiet. Baba did not actually mean to club him and changed his mood and said, "Never mind, I will come". But, of course, Baba did not go. Sathe did not change his feelings towards his father-in-law for a considerable time. One another occasion, Sathe went to intercede in a *marwadi's* affairs. Factious spirit was rife at Shirdi. Baba did not like that this high officer of the Government should interfere in such matters. Baba expressed his displeasure at that also.

Baba pulled down Sathe's ideas of vanity and pomp on one occasion. When the wada was being built, the laying of the foundation stone was the first question. But Sathe who went there accidentally wanted formally to lay the foundation stone himself. Baba told him, "This is the time for the foundation stone to be laid". Then Sathe took up a

LIFE OF SAI BABA

hatchet and proceeded to lay the foundation stone. Baba stopped him and asked, "Why do you go there? What have you to do with all this? The masons and workmen will do it?"

Baba's help to Sathe was mainly on the worldly plane, though Baba gave him repeated inklings of his *antarjnana*. But unfortunately Sathe had not even a fraction of the faith which Chandorkar, Dixit, and others had. On one occasion the Collector and several Settlement Officers were to meet him at some railway station. So, Sathe wanted to go from Shirdi. But Baba told him not to start. But still he wanted to go, his official ideas of punctuality standing in the way of appreciating and obeying Baba. he could not understand the reason for Baba's stopping him. Then Baba told Kelkar, "Lock him up for three days and then let him go." For three days he could not quit Shirdi and then when he went, he discovered that Baba somehow knew that the Settlement Officers and others had cancelled their programme and there was no meeting at all that day.

In religious matters more than in others, faith is wanted, and Sathe thought he should go to others for *upadesa*. For instance when others were going to Sakori to Upasani Baba for *upadesa*, he also considered why he should not go there to get *upadesa*. There was also a lady called Attabai of Sangola. There was *Ganapat* Upasaka. There was the *yogi* of Moregaon named Vinayak Patak Maharaj. these offered to give *upadesa* to Sathe. Sathe consulted Baba about Upasani Maharaj in person through Dada Kelkar in the latter two cases. Baba dissuaded him. Baba wanted him to concentrate, *Ananyachinta*, and have firm, exclusive faith in Himself, as he could look after every interest of his, temporal and spiritual. Unfortunately, Sathe could not rise to the full height of *Ananyachinta*. Like Upasani Maharaj, Sathe also got mixed up with local clashes. There were a number of people at Shirdi who were dead against him as they were against Upasani Maharaj, the chief of them being Nana Wali, a religious ascetic, who was a bully and a terror to most people there. The reason for Sathe's unpopularity was mostly in connection with his starting a Dakshina Bhiksha Sansthan. In December 1915, he had a call from Baba, and at Baba's bidding, he formed a society of which he himself was the president. It ran a journal called Sainath Prabha. The object of the society was to collect or recover a part of the money distributed by Baba daily and with it run the Shirdi Sai *Sansthan*. But this attempt to control receipts from Baba made Sathe unpopular. Nana Wali thought that he would be doing a good service to Baba and to the village by getting rid of this unpopular man Sathe. Some of the leading villagers on account of their bitterness against him held him responsible for the loss to the

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Sansthan by theft of some articles like silver horses from the palanquin and troubled him in other similar trivial matters. In January 1918, even lawyer's notices were served on him. Baba advised him to be patient and give a suitable reply. Baba said that he would protect him and that no proceedings would be taken against him. Really no proceedings were taken against him. However, the villagers still continued to regard this reserved and high placed Sathe with dislike and on one occasion Nana Wali took up a huge axe and stood at the entrance to the Mosque probably with a view to attack Sathe when he entered the Mosque. Dada Kelkar sent word to Sathe that this bully was standing with a big axe ready to hew him down if he should go to the Mosque. H. V. Sathe beat a hasty retreat from Shirdi and never visited it again.

Baba's kind interest in Sathe's family affair included his financial dealings. When Sathe retired, his financial circumstances decline, and he had to sell a jewel of his wife. Baba told Dada Kelkar then "Why does the fool of a Saheb sell my daughter's jewel?"

Regarding Babu, that is, the nephew of Dada Kelkar, Baba treated him as his pet. Baba would not attend to his official duties as the work of an Assistance. Babu was a measurer under Sathe's Assistant Limaye. Limaye could not check him and when Baba was told of Babu's services, he said, "Blast the Government service. Let him serve me." So, Babu constantly attended on Baba and would get to eat the choicest delicacies which were always available with Baba. In 1910, however, Babu's death was approaching. He had been eating mangoes too freely and died in 1910. Some time later, Baba said in the presence of Mrs. Pradhan, "This lady is going to be my Babu's mother." In a year after that, she became pregnant and the child then born was named Babu Pradhan.

H. V. Sathe was once asked how he continued to believe in Baba, even though Baba could not save him from the mischief of Nana Wali. Sathe replied, "Just as the Minister of the Peshwa was murdered right in front of Vittal at Pandharpur. That did not however prevent people from believing in Vittal even though Vittal did not save him, similarly his own faith in Sai Baba was unaffected by Nana Wali's threats.

There was a book written in English, namely, *Sai Katha Karandaka*, in which 10 or 12 stories about Baba were written by H. V. Sathe and printed and published. These are mistaken by some to be historical and to be real facts. But Sathe mentions in his statement in 1936 that these were fictions. Baba had given one fact in the course of his talk,

LIFE OF SAI BABA

and the entire story was built upon the basis of that single fact narrated by Baba. This *Sai Karandaka* was never shown to Baba and never got his approval. Similarly about the journal *Sai Prabha* that he ran, he left it entirely to Mr. Narayana Sundar Rao, who was the editor and the soul of it. The Nom-de-plume Ramgir in that journal represents only Narayana Sundar Rao.

Baba said in 1917 that Tilak was coming and accordingly on 19-5-1917 Lokamanya Bala Gangadhar Tilak visited him at Shirdi.

Another instance of Baba's All-knowing character was when Baba declared at Shirdi "My Gajanan is gone." At once people wrote to Sheogaon and learnt that just on the very day when Baba mentioned it, the saint Gajanan of Sheogaon expired.

G. G. NARKE

Amongst the highly placed and notable devotees who had direct contact with Sai Baba and performed worthy service for the Sai Sansthan, prominent mention has to be made of G. G. Narke, M.A. (Cal)., M.Sc., (Manch) Professor of Geology and Chemistry in the College of Engineering, Poona. He was perhaps the one man with the largest number of degrees who served as trustee of the Sansthan, and perhaps the most respected for his learning. he gave his statement to Sri. B. V. N. Swami on four days and the chief interest in his statement in his study of Baba and his research. The *Vidya Vasana*, characteristic of the man, gleams through his statement, and it is responsible for the position he occupied amongst the devotees and servants of Baba. Persons far inferior to him in education have been the highest in Sai bhakti and in their intense love to Baba, which stamped them as the *Ankita* or acknowledged children of Baba. Narke also had remarkable benefits from his contact with Baba, and had numerous opportunities to stay at Shirdi and get into close contact with Baba. But somehow the intellectual screen did not allow him to get into sufficiently close contact with Baba like the Ankitas. The reason for his going to Baba was first his wife, father-in-law and mother wanted him to go there. His father-in-law was Mr. Buty of Nagpur. G. G. Narke's learning included some religious studies also. he used to read Jnaneswari, and other books dealing with the greatness of Satpurusha, and he had heard that Sai Baba was such a *Satpurusha*, a *Samartha* Satpurusha will be more correct. He went out to England in 1909 as a State scholar of the Government of India and returned in August 1912.

When his wife, mother and father-in-law asked him to go to Shirdi to see Sai Baba, he first wanted to assure himself if Baba wanted him

LIFE OF SAI BABA

and so wrote back that he would go if Baba wanted him. So, in April 1913, he went up to see Sai Baba. His mother was greatly liked by Baba and as the son of his mother, he was naturally welcome. So, Shama alias Madhava Rao Deshpande introduced him to Baba. Baba then said to Shama, 'You introduce him to me! I have known him for thirty *pidis*. That was the initial surprise for Narke. His first impression of Baba was derived by looking at Baba's eyes. Baba's eyes were piercing. His glance pierced Narke through and through. Long after Baba passed away, in 1930 when Narke gave his statement, he said, 'I still have the indelible impression of Baba sitting in the *chavadi* with piercing eyes'.

Narke joined the current of devotees and did his portion of service to Baba and attended *artis* etceteras. But at one of the earliest *artis*, Baba was in a towering passion. He was fuming, cursing and threatening' whom and what for, nobody could say. And the idea occurred to Narke, 'Is Baba mad?'. that was during the *arti*, and after the *arti* was over, he went home and returned to Baba in the afternoon to massage Baba's feet and legs. Baba stroking his head said, 'Arre Narke, I am not mad'. The passing thought which he had in the morning when he was one in the crowd, was still known to Baba. So, he concluded that nothing was concealed from Baba. 'He is my *Antaryami*, inner Soul of my soul' he said. He then attempted to study Baba, and accumulated experience after experience demonstrating Baba's *Anataryamitva*. When Baba spoke, he spoke as one seated in Narke's heart knowing all his thoughts and his wishes. Narke said 'This is God within'. So, Baba must be God, he thought, but still as a scientific minded professor, he wanted to test him further. Whenever he tested him the conviction was brought home again to him that Baba was All-knowing and All-seeing, and All-powerful, that is, able to mould all things to his will. the professor gave out of the hundreds of instances that he knew, only a few in his statements, which proved beyond doubt that the past, present and future were open before Baba though the future appears unfixed and liable to be changed by human will. So, first let us see proof about Narke himself.

Baba, speaking in 1913, said that Buty the professor's father-in-law, would built a *Dagdiwada*, a stone edifice at Shirdi, and that the professor would be in charge of it. It was only in 1915-16, that is, two or three years later, that Buty began to build it. It was after 1920 that there was a *Sansthan* with trustees and Narke became one of the trustees in charge of the tomb in that very *Dagdiwada* owned by his father-in-law. Another instance, still more interesting to him, occurred this way. His mother, was very anxious about his employment, and

LIFE OF SAI BABA

noted with concern that since he did not have any employment, he was tossing from town to town for petty sums on mining and prospecting jobs which were advertised in the press in various places – even in Burma and Balaghat. He once stayed at Shirdi for 13 months without any employment. He got disgusted and thought that he ought to turn himself into a fakir. In 1914, when Baba was distributing kapnis to fakirs, he was hoping that Baba would give him a kapni. but Baba did not give him one. A little later, Baba beckoned him and placing his hand with kindness on his head, stroked it and said, 'Do not blame me for not giving you a kapni. That fakir (God) has not permitted me to give you one.' His mother and others were asking Baba what was to become of this Narke, seeing how unsettled his course of life was and how far he had to travel to earn small sums. His mother prayed to Baba to give him good employment nearer home or even near Shirdi. Baba answered, 'I will settle him at Poona'. Whenever there was any job advertised in the press, Narke would go to Baba and ask him, 'Shall I go to this place – Calcutta or Burma – for the job?' Baba would say, 'Go to Calcutta and Poona, Go to Burma and Poona', adding Poona after each. But there was no scope for his employment at Poona for some years. In 1917, an announcement was made that the Engineering College at Poona wanted a Geology Professor. Narke went up to Baba and asked him whether he should apply. Baba said, 'Yes'. So, Narke went to Poona to the people concerned. It was a very difficult and uphill task, because there were so many applicants and they were supported by very influential people. But for Narke there was no influential backing. Baba enquired of some people at Shirdi at that time, 'Where has Narke gone?' and they said that he had gone to Poona to try for the job. Allah will bless, was the remark of Baba and that was the backing Narke got. Baba also asked whether Narke had any children, and the person there said, 'None. The children born died after a very short life'. Baba again said, 'Allah will bless'. Both these blessings came true. In 1918, he secured the appointment of Professor of Geology and Mining in Poona and the children born to him subsequently are all alive. There are four of those children even now (1956). How Baba could foresee the future event is the moot problem for metaphysicians and philosophers and would puzzle every professor. The future must be fixed if it is to be foreseen. In that case there is no free will for any of the people who produce the results predicted. So, on the horns of this dilemma, learned people were impaled, and Narke, being no exception to the rule, was however, lucky enough to get actual experience of Baba's statements regarding the future turning out to be true. He had to conclude that Baba's nature was obviously divine and omnipotent, able to control the future in such a way as still to make people who are exercising their

LIFE OF SAI BABA

'free wills' to work up to the end that is fixed, Baba's nature was very puzzling and when Narke was studying Baba's nature, Baba complimented him, calling him a Hushiar or a clever man. Baba never stifled legitimate enquiry. Everything he said or did was full of significance and the professor declared, that he could mostly understand them.

We will now give the result of this professor's study of Baba, and then show the other side of the shield. The professor noted that Baba was living and operating in other worlds also, besides this world, and that he was working in an invisible body too. His words were highly cryptic, symbolical, allegorical, and not plain. But one carefully noting them could make out what Baba meant. Baba would often refer to '*Paica*', 'Oh, Brahmins earn much *paica* by their ways' he would say. He did not mean *dakshinas*. He meant '*Punya, Apurva* or merit acquired by careful observance of duties of a Brahmin. Baba was also often misunderstood, when he talked in his mysterious ways. For instance in 1914 or thereabouts, a Harda gentleman, rich and old came with a lady to Shirdi. He was suffering from tuberculosis. For one month he improved at Shirdi. But later on he grew worse and worse, and the end seemed to be nearing. One day, ladies of his house told Narke that he was in a critical condition, and that he should go and ask Baba for udhi. When he went, Baba said, 'The man would be better by quitting the earth, what can the udhi do? Any how, take the udhi and give it as it is wanted'. So, Narke gave the udhi, but did not report the conversation. The Harda gentleman's condition grew worse, and Shama, arriving later, informed Baba that death was imminent. Just about the time of death, Baba remarked, 'How can he die? In the morning he will come back to life' This was taken by the relatives of the sick man to mean that he would not die or that he would revive. So, they placed lamps all round the corpse and waited till noon the next day. But life was not restored. His funeral ceremonies followed. The Harda gentleman's relations thought Baba had given them false hopes, and for three years they did not return to Shirdi. one day, one of those relations saw Baba in a dream with the deceased man's head over his own. Baba disclosed the lungs in a rotten state, and said, 'From the torture of all this, I saved him'. Thereafter the relations renewed their visits to Shirdi. Then the meaning of Baba's words became apparent. How can he die, referred not to this life but the survival of human personality, which takes up new forms of life.

Baba used to sleep either at *Masjid* or at *chavadi*, and while sitting in front of the duni, he would often say to what distant places he went overnight and what he had done. People sleeping by his side and

LIFE OF SAI BABA

seeing his body by their side all night would wonder how he could have travelled when his body was there. But Baba did travel with the invisible body to distant places and there rendered actual service.

Baba used to often describe scenes in the other worlds. For instance, when a Shirdi *marwadi's* boy died, people returning from his funeral heard Baba say, 'He must be nearing the river now, just crossing it.' The professor G G Narke says this could have reference only to *Vaitarani* which dead souls have to cross.

Then Baba's reference to past lives often puzzled people. But those who had faith appreciated these recitals. Narke himself had full faith in Baba told him the facts of four of his previous lives. He said this in the presence of others. But others could not understand that these referred to Narke. Baba had the peculiar art of giving information to particular individuals in the midst of a group in a way that those concerned alone could understand and not others. Thus at one sitting, by a few acts and words, he benefited numerous people.

As Sai Baba could traverse other realm than this earth and could control what took place everywhere and, because he could see the past and the future alike quite clearly, his nature could be clearly inferred. He was not a body-bound soul. Baba himself brought this out by asking the question. 'Where are you? Where am I? Where is this world?' Pointing to his own body, he once said, 'This is my house. I am not here. My Mourshad Guru has taken me away. That is, his Dehatmabuddhi was completely swept off by that Guru. The professor, very clever in his logic, concluded 'Sai Baba is alive. He is where he was then. Even then he was where he is now.' These highly learned statements carry much truth with them.

Baba's references revealed to Narke that the function performed by Baba was very peculiar. Baba stated that he controlled the destinies of departed souls. So, that was an important function of his. As Sai Baba never spoke untruth, not merely babbled meaningless words, the professor concluded that He was a Divinely gifted person whose function was to regulate the fate of departed souls, that is, those who had been in contact with him.

As for Baba's declaration about his *Guru*, Professor Narke heard Baba say, *Maja Guru Brahman ahe*, that is, My *Guru* is a Brahmin. Having said so much about his *Guru*, professor Narke carefully noted that Baba did not say that he had any *sishya* to continue his line. On the other hand, Sai Baba said, 'I would tremble to come into the presence

LIFE OF SAI BABA

of my *Guru*.' There was no one prepared to serve Sai Baba in that way at Shirdi. Once Sai Baba asked, it seems, 'Who dares to call himself my disciple? Who can serve me adequately and satisfactorily?' But apart from a disciple to continue the line, Baba helped in various ways and in various degrees. He encouraged them, protected them, and gave them instructions occasionally. Narke was studying Baba's methods of teaching and improving devotees. Baba gave our moral tales and a few occasional directions. But these were exceptional. But the traditional method of Baba was not oral. His traditional method was first the negative portion, that is, the *Guru* did not give to his chosen disciple any *Guru mantra*. Usually a *Guru* whispers a *mantra* into the ear of the *sisya*, and he seems to be almost biting the ear when he is whispering. So, Baba said, '*Me Kanala Dasnara Guru Navhe*.' That is, 'I am not the *Guru* that bites the ear. He did not regard *japa* and meditation as sufficient for the *sisya*. These produce in the *sadhaka Abhimana* or *Ahamkara*. Unless and until *Ahamkara* is completely wiped out the *Guru* is unable to pour all his influence into the *sisya*. In Baba's school, the *Guru* does not teach. He radiates or pours influence. That influence is poured in and absorbed in full by the soul which has completely surrendered itself and blotted out the self, but is obstructed by the exercise of intelligence by reliance on self-exertion and by every species of self-consciousness and self-assertion. Baba, therefore, would tell some devotees, 'Be by me and keep quiet and I will do the rest,' that is, 'secretly or invisibly.' Of course faith in him – absolute faith – is a pre-requisite. One who was merely seeing him and staying by him for a while got faith. Baba gave experiences to each devotee, of his vast powers of looking into his heart, into the distance regions of space and time, past or future and these infused faith. One need not swallow a thing on trust. The solid benefit, temporal or spiritual reaped by the devotee and his feeling that he is under the eye and power of Baba always, wherever he may be and whatever he may do, gave him an ineradicable basis for his further temporal and spiritual guidance.

Baba's is the power that controls this world's goods and our fate here and now, as well as our experience and fate in the future, in this world and many unseen worlds. The professor concludes that the duty of a devotee under Baba is only to keep himself fit for the *Guru's* grace. That is, he should be chaste, pure, simple and virtuous and he should look trustfully and sincerely to the beloved master to operate on him secretly, and to raise him to various experiences, higher and higher in range, till he is taken at last to the distance goal. 'But one step is enough for me', is the proper attitude now, He need not take the trouble to decide complicated metaphysical and philosophical problems

LIFE OF SAI BABA

about the ultimate destiny. He is ill-prepared to solve them now. The *Guru* will lift him and endow him with higher powers, vaster knowledge and increasing realisation of truth. And the end is safe in the *Guru's* hands.

These above conclusions, as the professor says, are not from any single lecture or address by Baba, but are gathered from the various hints, his dealings with many people and his occasional words.

The professor was a keen observer of what Sai Baba said and did, and, therefore, even his inferences of Baba's methods and intentions are of some use. Talking about the orthodox method of *Sadhana Chatushtaya* that is *viveka*, *vairagya*, *samadhishatka* and *mumkshutva*, Narke says, taking the first two, there is something to note as to what *viveka* and *vairagya* are. Mere talk of *viveka* and *vairagya* without the power of knowing what should be experienced or enjoyed and what should be renounced, is childish and leads to self-delusion and deluding others. It is bookish wisdom and not real, and cannot stand the strain of actual life. Mere talking of *viveka* and *vairagya* without being filled with them will only prove a man a hypocrite. Here, he says, is the advantage of knowing Baba. When Baba said, 'I am in the dog, pig and cat', he actually felt himself inside the dog, pig and cat and could say what they felt and what treatment they got. But others say the same, because such statements are found in the Gita and they believe them to be true. But, as there is no feeling or realisation behind their words, such statements would tend to hypocrisy. as for Baba's nature, this intellectually advanced professor began to consider both the material and the spiritual side of Baba, but stressed mostly the material. He was insisting on the material, because other devotees were insisting on the spiritual and forgot the material. So, he told them, 'Though Baba is God from the devotees' point of view, yet he is a man seen in the flesh and with limitations to which an individual embodied soul is subject'. The two co-exist and are both true, each in its way. But his friends, the devotees at Shirdi, did not agree with him or, at any rate, relish his view. They were relying on the puranas and Ithihasas. They were talking of 56 crores of islanders in *Dwaraka* at Sri Krishna's time. The professor disputed the statistical accuracy of the population and said, 'We are thirty three crores in the whole of India now and India is so over populated that we have to tread on each other's heels.' and would not accept that estimate of 56 crores. As he was disputing so many propositions in the puranas, they asked him if he would abide by Baba's decision on the matter, and he said, 'Yes'. Then they all went to Baba. Madhavrao

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Deshpande and other devotees asked Baba, 'Are the *puranas* true?' Baba said, 'Yes'.

Madhavrao : 'What about Rama and Krishna?'

Sai Baba : 'They were great souls, because they were Avatars.'

Devotees : 'This Narke will not accept all that. He says you are not God'.

Sai Baba : 'What he says is true.' (Here the Professor was very glad that Baba confirmed his views of the material side of Baba). 'But I am your father, and you should not speak like that, You have to get your benefit and everything from me.'

The professor says, 'Baba thus admitted his limitations'. He was God no doubt in the experience of the devotee; but because the devotee felt that, Sai Baba did not assert himself to be, in fact, nothing but God. He did not draw logical corollaries from it, nor use that position to help himself to the wealth etcetra, of the devotees'. On the basis of the devotees view, Sai Baba did not declare Antinomianism, that is setting himself up as above law. On the other hand Sai Baba disobeyed either the moral law or the law as it prevails in the country. He was never indecent in dress or behaviour and was very reserved with women. Here obviously, the professor is contrasting the behaviour of Sai Baba with the behaviour of Upasani Baba who, at Sakori, 3 miles further off, declared himself to be above all law, and occasionally disobeyed them, and who was an *Avadhuta*, that is, without any covering, and was freely moving with large number of women folk.

But in the above, the professor failed to note that Baba was pointing out a very important truth. Things have a material and spiritual side. There are images, *Gurus*, *Avatars*, etcetra and they have a spiritual side as well as a material one. If any person is earnest in attempting to benefit by contact with these, he would commit a terrible mistake if he would advert to the material side only, the side of limitations. If he wanted real benefit, he would have to forget completely the material side or portion, and the limitation that go with the material, and think only of the divine in the image, in the *Guru* and in the *Avatar*, and that is what Baba meant by saying, 'You have to get your benefit and everything from me, as I am your father'. Baba is the father of all devotees, only if viewed as God. If viewed as man, he had no children, and so could not be the father of all his devotees. But if viewed as

LIFE OF SAI BABA

God, he is necessarily the father of all, possessed of parental kindness. When the fatherhood is recognised by the devotees, and they wish to get the benefits of being his children, the Guru-God Baba gives them that benefit, returns their love, and his eye of kindly supervision is over all those that love him. That love is destroyed by adverting to the material side. This all truth, the intellectually developed professor was apt to ignore.

About two generations back, there was a Professor of Geology, an Englishman, in the Presidency College, Chennai. He went out on his study of geology and anthropology in the mofussil with his usual small mallet in hand and came to a hamlet where there were a number of pottery works in the shape of horses in front of a temple. To study their composition, the professor knocked off the nose of one of the horses. The villagers were aghast, but soon gathered in a crowd and hunted the professor out who run for his life. Similarly, if one should go to the sacred shrine of Tirupati and look at Srinivasa's image, which fills so many devotees with the holiest of feelings, thankfulness for blessings already received and with hope for the grant of further relief prayed for; and if one should take up one's mallet and chip off a portion of sacred image, he might discover the actual composition of the material-whether it is of the Tertiary age, or whether it is a drop rock. But from the point of common-sense anyone would declare that the geological test and appraisal of the sacred image is absurd and may prove ruinous to any man who attempts it. The sastras repeatedly declare that in the case of images, saints, etcetra, the physical aspect should not be considered. In them, matter and spirit are intertwined and closely combined, as in the living body, and when a holy person is approached, it is a sad lack of wisdom for one to be thinking of the material body and its short-comings. Baba himself expressed this view on a famous occasion. In 1910 or 1911, his fame was widespread in the Bombay State. The wife of the Revenue Commissioner, Mr. Curtis, wanted to go to Baba with a view to get his blessing for an issue as she was barren, and the Revenue Commissioner accompanied her. The Collector, the Deputy Collector and a host of people were coming to Shirdi, and the chief of them, Sir George Seymour Curtis, was without faith and was only desirous of 'doing' Baba, that is, seeing him so as to be able to say that he had been to Shirdi and had the opportunity of seeing the much talked of fakir. Knowing his mentality, long before the crowd could be seen, Baba was saying at the *Dwarakamayee*, 'Rascal! Coming to see me! What have I got? I am a naked fakir with human organs'. People could not make out whom Baba was referring to. But soon the full official procession headed by Mrs. and Mr. Curtis, and followed by the Collector, the Assistant Commissioner, and others

LIFE OF SAI BABA

passed in front of the *Dwarakamayee*. Then they went on to the *chavadi* and from there wished to send word to Baba. That was however impossible as no one would convey orders to Baba. Then Baba himself passed in front of the *chavadi*, and Mrs. Curtis wished to have a talk. Baba said, 'Wait for half an hour'. But Baba returned within ten minutes, and she again said she wished to have a talk. Baba said, 'Wait for one hour'. The officers were impatient. Mr. Curtis had done Baba and done Shirdi and they went off. Of course Mrs. Curtis's object, namely, to get a child by Baba's blessings, was not achieved.

Professor Narke gives an excellent analysis of the four margas, namely, *Yoga*, *Karma*, *Jnana* and *Bhakti*, and points out how *yoga* and *karma* margas were not those prescribed by Baba, nor even the *Jnana marga*, that is, if it is taken as consisting in an intellectual effort to understand the Upanishads and Brahma Sutras or a study of the Self. That was not Baba's method or aim. Baba renounced all attachments after being a master of everything that this world and other worlds have to offer, by reason of his wonderful siddhis and power. Therefore, his *vairagya* was real *vairagya* and Baba's continued and perpetual activity to serve the public was *Nishkama karma*. But, as for the *margas*, the professor points out that *bhakti marga* was the main plank of Baba as of other saints. Now what are its features, and what is its goal? First, *Guru bhakti*, and next serving and loving the Guru and God are its chief features. Baba stressed the importance of devotion to one's Guru and treating him as God in, through, and as, the Guru, and identifying the Guru with god, that forms Baba's *bhakti marga*. The professor's analysis is fairly right, though he was not very successful in following Baba as God for his own purpose. Intellectualism is admirable in certain respects, but, for the purpose of actual life, the habit of viewing everything from the intellectual standpoint weakens one's power to adopt Baba's method of identifying the Guru with god and plunging boldly with full faith in every world of his into the course that Baba may point out. What Dixit and others with greater faith could do was not possible for a highly trained intellectual. The professor notes that Baba, whom everybody considered to be a Mohammedan had such great reverence for Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as the professor himself was not able to feel or exhibit. But the professor was an orthodox Hindu in many respects of the intellectual type. He was studying *Yoga Vasishtha*, a highly philosophical work, which many find very difficult, if not possible, to understand. About his study of *Yoga Vasishtha*, Baba had sometime to say, There are portions even in *Yoga Vasishtha* which would enable once to get into intimate contact with God and be absorbed in him. When the professor was reading a passage apparently of the above sort, Baba told him to

LIFE OF SAI BABA

give him Rs. 15 *dakshina*. The professor pleaded his impecuniosity saying, 'Baba, you know I have no money. Why do you ask me for Rs. 15 *dakshina*?' Baba said, 'Yes, I know it. But you are reading an excellent book now. Get me Rs. 15 *dakshina* from that'. The professor knew that he should study that special portion of *Yoga Vasishtha* which refers to 15 elements of which one's personality is made up, and present them to Baba in his own heart, as his *Antaryami*. that is, he should get *laya* in Baba. But this was only an intellectual perception. The professor was sufficiently orthodox to carry on, (or to get carried on) the usual worship of sacred images of *Avatars* at his own house. But this does not lead one very far in achieving the goal of *laya*.

Baba gave this professor sufficient opportunities to get a proper appreciation of himself. In 1916, when plague was rife at Shirdi, the usual prasada or naivedya of *halwa* had not been brought to the *Dwarakamayee*. The Baba asked Narke to go and get the sweetmeat from the *Halwayi's* shop. So, Narke went and told the wife of the sweetmeat merchant of Baba's order. She then pointed to the corpse of her husband, who had died of plague, and that Narke might take the sweetmeat from the almirah. He took it, but he was trembling all the time, for fear he might catch the infection and others eating it might catch the infection if that was given as prasada. But as he approached Baba, Baba said, 'You think you will live if you are away from Shirdi. That is not so. Whosoever is destined to be struck, will be struck. Whosoever is to die will die. Whosoever is to be caressed will be caressed'. The halwa was given as Baba's prasada, and no one caught plague.

So, Narke realised the wonderful knowledge Baba had over sources of danger, and the way he controlled danger from plague, and guided people aright, a knowledge which ordinary human beings did not possess. Baba was obviously superhuman, that is, Divine. Baba knew where cholera was at Shirdi and how it could be controlled. He had lepers about him who massaged his legs. He could evidently keep off and control leprosy infection. Udhi was usually put into the mouth of sick people, and the leper by the side of Baba sometimes took the udhi from the fire and distributed it, and all accepted it from the hands of the leper. Yet no harm resulted. So, Narke had ample opportunities to see and learn about Baba's divine knowledge and divine control. But he never attained even a fraction of that intense faith and self-forgetfulness and that intense love which characterised the Ankita children of Baba like H.S. Dixit, Purandhare, and others.

SRI NARAYAN ASHRAM, SANNYASI OF WAI

We shall now take up two cases of Baba's use of his mystic power to give bliss or productive power to his devotees namely, Narayan Ashram and Kusa Bhav. The life of this devotee Narayan Ashram from Satara district is interesting from the view point of Baba's method for spiritual improvement. In 1910, he was Mr. Toser in the Customs Department, and he continued to be in that department till 1926, when he retired on pension. In 1910, however, he had the advantage of listening to Das Ganu Maharaj's *kirtan*. As usual, whatever was his subject, the *Kirtankar* dilated upon Sai Baba's glories and qualities, and Sai Baba's picture was always at the meeting. Having derived a very good impression of Baba's saintliness, Mr. Toser, at the close of the *kirtan*, went and asked Das Ganu whether Sai Baba was living, and was told that he was at Shirdi. Within five days of this information, Mr. Toser hurried up to Shirdi and fell at the feet of Sai Baba. His attachment was so powerful that in six months he paid nine visits to Shirdi. He went in later years also, but the first visits were the most memorable. The impression derived from Das Ganu's *kirtan* was greatly strengthened and vivified by his frequent visits. Until 1918, Mr. Toser was entirely under Baba's influence. Afterwards, he passed into the charge of Vasudevananda Saraswathi of Gurudeswara on the banks of the Narmada near Nanded in Gujarat. Vasudevananda Saraswathi had in fact attained *Mahasamadhi* even in 1915. But he was in spiritual contact with Baba and Sri Narayan Ashram believed that Baba had left him in the charge of Vasudevananda Saraswathi from 1918. In 1931, Narayan Ashram went to Veda Rama Swamy of Kasi, Tarakamath, Durgaghat, and obtained *Sannyasa Diksha* from

LIFE OF SAI BABA

him. Internal changes are hardly matters for publication, but Swami was kind enough just to offer a few hints so that readers may know more about Sai Baba. He begins by saying:

Sai Baba had different ways of dealing with different people. He was the centre and to each man he darted a separate radius. Most people who approached Baba cared for material things only and hardly any came to him for the highest spiritual benefit of *Atma Nishta*.

Hari Sitaram Dixit, Chandorkar and Dabolkar, were probably those who came close enough to him to receive high teaching. Yet it is a question if any of them got into *Atma Nishta* or anywhere near that. Baba had made Dixit read two of Eknath's works, as he was but a beginner in the religious field and had to chiefly develop his *bhakti*. Of course, immediate proximity was not needed for development under Baba. When I was at Shirdi, I would mostly go and sit away by myself in the Sathe *wada* and not be at Mosque. As even at the *wada*, one is under Baba's direct influence.

Baba's methods of teaching varied. He would simply touch with his palm the head of a devotee and that would have one kind of influence. Sometimes He pressed his hand heavily on the head of a devotee as though he was crushing out some of the lower impulses. On occasions, he would pat on the devotee's back or would pass his palm over his head. Each had its own effect affecting the sensation and feeling of the subject. Apart from touch, he effected an invisible operation on the devotee, whereby he could bring about a great change in him, and of that Mr. Toser had an experience. Baba conveyed to him graciously, without using any words or even touching him, the feeling that differences between various souls, or for that matter, all differences were unreal, and the one real thing was the Divinity which underlies all. This was in 1913 or 1918 perhaps. This truth was not uttered in words by Baba before Narayan Ashram. It seems to have been uttered in presence of R. B. Purandhare to somebody. Sri Narayan did not mention these experiences of his either to Mr. Dixit or to Dabolkar, though Mr. Dixit was writing experiences of devotees in his *Sai Lila Masik*, and Dabolkar was adding to his *Sai Sat Charitra* out of such material. Neither of them asked him for his experience. Baba spoke to Narayan Ashram only a few words, and they were direct and plain words. He did not talk to him in parables. When numerous people flocked to Baba, he would employ parables. So far as Mr. Toser could find out, Baba was trying to push people who came to him just a few steps above their level. As for further steps, further guides and further influences would come in later as matter of course. There was nothing

LIFE OF SAI BABA

wrong in going from one saint to another saint, especially if the first Guru had attained Mahasamadhi.

Mr. Toser himself notices that other saints were talked of by Baba or they talked of him as brothers, and that they belonged to the same group so to speak. Thus, one Daji Maharaj, a saintly *Grihasta Brahmin*, who lived at Dangar Takidi, near Nanded in the Nizam's State, was referred to by Baba as his brother. That Maharaj passed away only in 1934. he was practising *Gayatri Puruscharanam*. in 1914, that Maharaj once said at Dangar Takidi, "Yesterday Sai Baba Came here in the form of Maruti and there was a great rumbling noise at his arrival". Mr. Toser and his father being Maruti worshippers, had got a temple built for Maruti in 1918 at Ville Parle, in Hanuman street and named the God, 'Sai Hanuman' remembering the fact that Sai was Hanuman. The very day this temple was consecrated at Ville Parle. Baba gave, it seems, Rs. 25 to a *Brahmin* called Vaze and made him perform Satyanarayana puja at Shirdi. People connect these two events as cause and effect. Sri Narayan Ashram says, "Sai Baba never spoke to me or so far as I remember to anyone else about the desirability of *Sannyasa*." But I myself had that feeling and became a *sannyasi*. The *Guru*, Sri Narayan Ashram says, "is a medium, a means to realize your ownself. He gives you the initial push and then you have to exert yourself, and go higher and higher to your height. Sai Baba thus was a medium responsible for a considerable and momentous advance in my spiritual history." Before we went to Baba, one Vinayak Bhat Shandale, whom he met in 1900, and who made him read *Yoga Vasishta* with zest, as a Guru or medium for him. So, Mr. Toser had a number of stepping stones, but the most interesting fact about him is that Sai Baba gave him the impression that he recognised no differences and that in fact no differences did exist and he filled him with prolonged bliss alike when Mr. Toser was with Baba at the Mosque and also when Mr. Toser went to his quarters, in, Sathe *wada*. "Even at the *wada*," he says, "one is under Baba's direct influence."

This grant of internal bliss and that for long stretches and for numerous days gives an indication of Baba's own internal bliss. It is for this purpose that Narayan Ashram's experience is valuable to us, that is, he shows us Baba is *Satchitananda*.

Sri Narayan Ashram's wife and mother are living in the same house with himself, but he is observing the rules of *Sannyas*, and devoting his attention to *Paramarth* and when Sai *Bahajan* groups gather, he comes and with his melodious voice sings Sai *Kirtans*, as he did at the All India Sai Devotees' Convention at Poona in 1952.

KUSA BHAV

Krishnaji Kasinath Joshi was known as Kusa Bhav and was the son of Kasinath Padmakar Joshi, a Joshi *Vatandar*, living at Mirzgaon, 70 miles from Ahmednagar. He was born in 1866.

Kusa Bhav's experience with Baba is very interesting as a study in Baba's ability to confer mysterious power. He was a poor *vatandar*, having passed a vernacular school examination to qualify himself for a master's place on Rs. 5 or Rs. 7 per month. He also got himself trained for the hereditary duties of a village priest. But neither the school master's place nor the priestship attracted him. He was ambitious. He found once Datta Maharaj, a *Guru* with great power and went to him and got trained in *Yoga*, that is, *Asana*, *pranayama* and the raising of *Kundalini Sakti*. The *Guru* imparted to him only the general teachings, but this *sisya* was not satisfied and prevailed upon the *Guru* to give him instruction in *Maranam*, *Uchchatanam* and *Vasikaram*. The *Guru* gave those *mantras* to him and he learnt them all. He had therefore to deal with evil spirits, and so he wore an iron bangle as a talisman when he was repeating the *mantras*. He mastered the *mantras* by his *japa*, and he was able to order sweetmeats to come, and they would come. He would spread out his hands and his hands would become filled with *pedas*. He would show this to the on lookers and distribute the *pedas* to them. But he was debarred from using them for himself. He could destroy *abhicharan*, evil spells, by others. When he was aged only 22 in 1888, fully armed with these magical powers, the *Guru* left him, wanting to go to the Himalayas to live there alone up to the end of his life. Kusa Bhav accompanied him up to Delhi, and there, when parting, the *Guru* told him that he should go to Sai Baba of Shirdi whom he referred to as his elder brother, '*Maja Vadil Bhai*' and that he

LIFE OF SAI BABA

should go to him and do whatever he directed. With this injunction he disappeared. Kusa Bhav in 1908 went to Baba at Shirdi, but, as soon as he came near the Mosque, Baba would not allow him to enter. "Throw away your iron bangle. Stop the production of your *pedas* and then come" was Sai Baba's order. Kusa Bhav broke the iron bangles and throw away. Then to sustain himself, he had to beg for food at Shirdi. Baba's order was that he should sit in a corner of the Mosque and go on reading *Dasabodha* of Ramdas Swami during the day. At night Kusa Bhav would sleep wherever he found some place to lie in. Baba gave him no *upadesa mantra*.

When Kusa Bhav went in 1908 Baba had few visitors, and he was not even asking for *dakshina*. But he would take only a few *pice* for his fuel for *dhuni*. Nana Saheb Nimonkar was a big man visiting him. Baba imparted faith to those resorting to him by his internal work and internal operation. He would ask every one to stick to his *Ishta Devata* and would grant them *Sakshatkara* of that *Ishta Devata*. Kusa Bhav stayed three full years at a stretch with Baba, and afterwards he visited Shirdi off and on for 9 years. Baba then told him, "See a man with three heads, that is, see Datta at Gangapur." Every year Kusa Bhav went to Gangapur twice; one for *Guru Poornima* and the other for *Magha Poornima*. Baba once told him to do 108 *parayanams* of *Guru Charitra*, taking 3 days for each *parayana*, and Kusa Bhav did this at Gangapur and stayed there for 10 or 11 months for this purpose.

As for his mantric powers Baba had forbidden their use and he was not using them. he felt the loss of mantric exercise keenly. One Ekadasi day, however, he visited Baba, and Baba asked him, "What do you eat today"" Kusa Bhav replied "Nothing, it is *Ekadasi* today."

Baba: What does *Ekadasi* mean?

Kusa Bhav: *Upavasa*.

Baba: What is *Upavasa*?

Kusa Bhav: It is like *Rojas*.

Baba: What is *Rojas*?

Kusa Bhav: It means eating nothing except *Kandamula*.

Kanda means tubers, usually sweet potatos, and *Mula* means roots.

Baba punning upon the word *Kanda*, called it *Kaanda*. *Kaanda* means onion. Baba said, "Kaanda you are eating. Here is *Kaanda* for you." So, saying, Baba handed over few onions to Kusa Bhav and asked him to eat them. Kusa Bhav replied, "Baba, if you eat, I will also eat." Baba ate some and Kusa Bhav also ate some. Then visitors arrived. Baba wanting to have fun, and said, "Look at this *Bamnia*, he is eating onions on an *Ekadasi* day." Kusa Bhav said that Baba ate it and so he also ate it. Baba said, "No, no; you see what I ate." He then vomited. What Baba vomited was really '*Kanda*.' Baba said, "See, it is not onion but sweet potatoes." Kusa Bhav was surprised and thought the production of sweet potatoes was his opportunity. He fell upon the sweet potatoes and swallowed them. Baba abused him and beat him, saying "Why do you eat the vomit – *uchishta*?" Kusa Bhav did not answer. In a moment, Baba's mood changed. He said, "I shall give you now my *varam*. Henceforth you will have the power to produce the *udhi*, that is, *udhi* from the *dhunimayi* of Shirdi, by merely remembering me and holding forth your hands. Give this *udhi* freely. It will help all people and you will get *punya*. This was said to contrast Baba's boon with Kusa Bhav's previously distributing stolen *pedas*, which if eaten would result in sin.

As Kusa Bhav was giving this statement, he was seated on a bed at Poona on a cold day and suddenly he stretched out his hand with closed eyes and uplifted face, and in a minute he said, "Here is *udhi*." His palms were full of *udhi*. "Hold your hands and receive the *udhi*" he said. Mr. Avaste, who was with Mr. B. V. N. Swami, stretched out a piece of paper as the *udhi* was falling from Kusa Bhav's hands, and it was found to be warm, coming fresh from the *Dhunimayi* on a cold day. Kusa Bhav used this power of producing *udhi* with great effect. There was an aristocratic family in Poona where a patient had a longstanding illness, paralysis probably, and Kusa Bhav, by the use of this *udhi*, cured him. "This production of *udhi*", Kusa Bhav says, "is a power vested in him by Baba once and for all and does not require any *japa* on his part, but only prayer. This *udhi* removes various ills and might even cure barrenness." He said that he had practically given up the production of *pedas*; but the temptation of producing them was sometimes irresistible. Once at Shirdi itself, this Kusa Bhav produced *pedas*. He also used his old power of exorcising *Abhicharan* in the case of Rajmachikar's grandson, who was suffering from mysterious *biba* marks, that is, marks of the marking nut on his body, on his cloths, even his bed clothes and cured him.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

During one visit, Baba told Kusa Bhav, "Next time you come, come two of you." His father was with him at the time and Baba's order meant "Come married." Shortly thereafter he got married, but he went to Shirdi alone without his wife, at first. Then his wife came to Shirdi and took him away to lead a married life. In consequence of this, he had children and grandchildren.

On one occasion, Baba told him, "Why do you take the trouble to come all this distance to see me? I am there." Kusa Bhav could not understand this. Then Baba described a specific plot of land in Mirzgaon and Kusa Bhav went there and after clearing the prickly pear on it, found a *samadhi* there. That *samadhi* he began to worship. There he got *darsan* of Baba, that is, Datta Baba, whose *samadhi* it was, and that Datta Baba always appears once a year on Datta *Jayanthi*. That saint, however, was called Pakir Shah. He lived 200 years ago and held the land on which the tomb now exists as an *inam* from the *jagirdar*. That Pakir Shah or Datta as he is called, occasionally talks of Sai Baba, though he talks very little. People can see him only once a year. This Pakir Shah does not give any help either for *jnana marga* or *bhakti marga*. His appearance merely inspires faith. he is to be seen and worshipped or bowed to, and he says, "Sai Baba is alive", but whether as a spirit or as some *Avadar*, he does not say. Pakir Shah says that he and Sai Baba are inter-related as persons of the same order. Baba received Kusa Bhav from one Datta Maharaj and left him under the care of Datta Pakir. Kusa Bhav passed away and his tomb near the foot of Shivaji Hills is worshipped by his devotees.

RAO SAHIB YESHWANT JANARDHAN GALWANKAR

Sri Rao Sahib Yeshwant Janardhan Galwankar was one of the prominent members of the Sai Baba Sansthan Committee and Editor of the Sai Lila Masik for some years. Y. J. Galwankar was the son-in-law of Anna Saheb Dabolkar or Hemand Pant (author of Sri Sai Satcharitra). He was working as a Superintendent in the Home department of the Bombay Secretariat. Anna Saheb Dabolkar's contact with Sai Baba naturally drew Galwankar to Sai Baba. He was taken by his father-in-law four or five times to Sai Baba, and at the first visit did not derive any strong impressions. But gradually his interest in Baba increased. Baba himself appeared in his dream and asked for Rs. 2 dakshina. Later he woke up and wished to send Rs. 2 by money order to Shirdi. Baba in the dream gave him two directions, the first, namely *Nekene Vagave*, that is, behave with probity and integrity, (the advice given evidently referred to his official position) and secondly to be chaste and sexually pure. Galwankar says that he has followed those directions with great care and zeal.

However, the great impression that Galwankar got was in 1917, when he went to Shirdi and Baba placed his palm over his head. That had a strong effect on him. He completely forgot himself and all surroundings and was in an ecstatic trance. He learnt later that Baba then spoke and told the people present that Galwankar had integrity and purity already in previous *janmas*. Baba added that he placed Galwankar in his present mother's womb, and the integrity and purity were still retained by him. During Christmas and other vacations, Galwankar went to Baba with full faith. Baba, however, did not give him self-realisation on advaidic lines nor any teaching on ethical or

LIFE OF SAI BABA

religious matters except what is stated above. He heard Baba saying that he was not the 3 ½ cubits height of body, but he was everywhere and that the devotees should see him in every place. Galwankar believes that his studies of the *Gita*, the *Bhagavata* and *Eknath* were all directed by Baba, though Baba did not tell him to study these just as he told to Jog, Kaka Dixit, and others.

Being deeply interested and concerned with his office work and other affairs, Galwankar did not try to get into closer contact with Baba before 1918. He was also comparatively young at the time and did not view matters of life very seriously. After Baba's *Mahasamadhi*, Galwankar became more serious. In 1921, he set off on a pilgrimage with his family to Prayag and Kasi. At Baradwajasram in Prayag, he prayed to Sai Baba that he might get sight of some saint. Within a few minutes after he left Baradwajasram, there was a venerable saint on the roadside and the guide showed him the saint saying that rarely once in seven years or so, that saint would visit Prayag and that he would not allow people to approach him nor would he accept money. But, being emboldened by Sai's grace, Galwankar approached the saint, and instead of his getting angry, the saint welcomed him with raised arms saying, "Come child". His wife, mother and other ladies also paid their respects to the saint. They were all blessed by the saint and having only annas in his pocket, Galwankar gave that to the saint who received it. Thus Sai Baba answered his prayer effectively in 1921. Having become ecstatic by Baba's blessing and teaching, he gradually paid more and more attention to *Adhyatma* to the spiritual side of existence. That was in 1932. Then he had a dream. Baba came to him in the dream and asked him, "What do you want?" His reply was, "I want *prem* and only *prem*" – that is, love. Baba blessed him saying, "You will have *prem*", and disappeared. Even afterwards Galwankar had spells of *prem* gushing through him, sometimes while meditating, sometime while reading, and even at other times. Thus his slight touch with Baba before *Mahasamadhi* ripened into full fruition after *Mahasamadhi* and his life became nobler and higher.

SRI RAO BAHADUR MORESWAR W. PRADHAN

M. W. Pradhan was President of the Sansthan for some time and his contact with Sai Baba was the result of N. G. Chandorkar's influence. In May 1910, Pradhan's brothers were chatting with Chandorkar, and his brother Rama Rao asked, 'Akkalkote Maharaj was a great saint, and he is dead. Is there anyone nowadays of this type?' Then Chandorkar revealed to him that there was, and that was Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi. Till then Shirdi had never been heard of by others, and they learnt that it was the Kopergaon taluk of Ahmednagar district on the Dhond-Manmad line, 11 miles from Kopergaon station. Chandorkar then gave such a vivid and glowing account of Baba's power, kindness, greatness and his personality that every one hearing it was anxious to start immediately to get *darshan* of Baba. So, a group of about 14 people went the very next day to Shirdi, but M.W. Pradhan was not in the party. The party returned and brought with them a copy of Baba's picture and Das Ganu's *Bhakta Lilamrita*, describing Baba's life and miracles. M W Pradhan took them to his wife and there read the book. Then all his doubts about Baba vanished and he became a firm believer that Baba was a true saint. His wife's faith was even greater. They were anxious to depart for Shirdi. A fortnight after the return of the first party that is in May 1910 Pradhan went to Shirdi. Chandorkar's two sons, namely Bapu and Babu, were his companions. He wanted to present Baba with gold sovereigns and carried them as well as some currency notes. When he arrived at Shirdi, Baba was standing on the road near the *Lendi* as though he was waiting for the party. At once Pradhan and others got down and he prostrated to Sai Maharaj. There he met Rao Bahadur Sathe and Mr. Noolkar, First Class Sub Judge, and then went to the mosque where he wished to garland Baba and gave him all the presents. There, he felt that Sai Baba was

LIFE OF SAI BABA

really a great saint, and that his having come was really fulfilling his mission in life.

This rising faith was lucky, because Baba put his faith to the test at once. Baba asked for *dakshina*. Originally Pradhan had intended to give Rs. 20, but he gave Baba a gold sovereign instead. Baba took it, turned it this side and that side, and said 'What is this?' Mr. Noolkar who was there said, 'Baba, this is a guinea (a former British coin)'. Baba said, 'What is its worth?' Mr. Noolkar replied, 'Rs. 15'. Baba returned the coin to Pradhan saying, 'I do not want this. Keep it with you, but give me Rs. 15'. Pradhan was glad to have a coin touched by Baba and returned to him and gave Baba Rs. 15, then Baba, professing to count the rupees said, 'I find only Rs.10 here. Give me Rs. 5 more'. This was a test because having Rs. 15 in hand, he said that he had only Rs. 10 and was testing a lawyer, who would generally be combative and discuss questions of accounts. But Pradhan rose to the occasion and gave him Rs. 5 more. Then Pradhan remembered that he had intended to give Rs. 20, and Baba took that Rs. 20 under cover of wrong calculation. Baba did not ask for more. So, Baba's *vairagya* and indifference to money was clear, and Baba's testing of *bhaktas* also was clear.

Baba gave him other means also for strengthen his faith, that is, instances of his *antarjnana* and help by miraculous means. On the next occasion, when he visited Baba, he beckoned to him addressing his as Bhav and said merely, 'It will be all right in 2 or 4 days'. Then Baba gave him *udhi* and Pradhan returned from the Mosque. Pradhan remained for there for 8 days on this occasion. And during that time he arranged for a special dinner or bhiksha to Sai Baba, and asked Baba, 'what the dishes were to be and who the invitees were to be'. Baba said, '*Pooran poli Obbattu*' was to be part of the dinner. Babu, nephew of Dada Kelkar, was to be one of the invitees. 'I also will come' - '*Mehe Yeyin*'. So, at the meal the next day every one was served, and a place was set apart for Baba, and dishes were also kept there. A crow lifted a *pooran poli* off the plate, and carried it away. They said, Baba is the crow and had taken the favourite *pooran poli*.

That evening, Baba gave one remarkable hint of his *antatjnana* and kindness to Pradhan. Baba touched his limbs on one side and said, 'On this side of my body there is excruciating pain. It will be alright in two or four days'. But Baba seemed to be healthy, and what he meant by his words was not then clear. But it became clear after Pradhan reached Bombay.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

During this stay, on a Thursday, Pradhan saw Baba preparing food in a *hundi* pot to feed large numbers, *samaradhana*. He drove away every one from the *Masjid* at that time, and was alone with his *hundi*. Pradhan, Bapu and Babu, went in. Baba received them well and evidently excluded all others to give these a private interview. Baba appeared to be singing something first, but Pradhan discovered that the words were

*Kayare Apla kai Manave,
Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram.*

that is, what we should say is,
Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram.

At once Pradhan was overcome with emotion, and he placed his hand on Baba's foot. These words were the *Guru Mantra* that had been given to M.V. Pradhan by his family Guru, Hari Bua, and that mantra he had long neglected. Baba was kindly reviving his interest and regard for that *Guru Mantra*, for his spiritual benefit, without having any express consultation or question from Pradhan. This deep love of Baba greatly impressed Pradhan. When the contents of the *hundi* were boiling, Baba put his entire hand into them, not using a spoon or ladle, and his hand was not scalded or swollen. Then suddenly at noon, Baba took Pradhan and the two boys to the *Lendi*. That was not his usual hour for visiting the *Lendi*, but there, after taking them, Baba was digging into the earth small hollows and giving some corn seeds into Pradhan's hands and made him sow that corn in the hollows. The seeds were then covered up with earth, Baba made Pradhan water the patches. Then the whole party returned to the Mosque. The significance of this event was that 7 or 8 years later *Lendi* garden was purchased for Baba's *Sansthan* by M.V. Pradhan for a sum of about Rs. 1500. Baba recognised that Pradhan would be useful to the *Sansthan* by his purchase of the *Lendi* garden, which has numerous holy associations with Baba, and forms an essential part of the sacred places revered by his devotees. At parting on that occasion, Babu Chandorkar placed a plate under Baba's feet, and pouring water over his feet, collected the *pada tirtham* to be carried home. That was unusual. Only *udhi* was taken till then, and *pada tirtham* was used only at the *arati*, at Shirdi, and not taken home.

But on this occasion, as Babu Chandorkar took *pada tirtham* home, Pradhan also took some home. On his way back, he was lucky enough to get into the first train, namely, the Punjab mail, though he did not have the ticket for it. That was lucky, for he reached home four or five

LIFE OF SAI BABA

hour earlier, and on arrival learnt that his mother had an attack of paralysis, *Hemiplegia*. She was having excruciating pain on one side as Baba said. So, Baba was referring her pain and not his own pain, and Pradhan was lucky in going home by the earlier train with *pada tirtham* and Baba's *udhi*. The relations at home were considering whether they should inform Pradhan of his mother's illness, But Baba himself knew it and sent him back in time. the doctor, noting the high temperature of the patient and her constipation and restlessness, considered her condition critical, but if, however, the bowels moved in the course of the night, the doctor thought he situation would be more hopeful. It was 4.30 a.m. when Pradhan reached home. At once he gave Baba's *udhi* and *tirtham* to the mother. She became somnolent. A little later, her bowels moved, and her temperature fell. The doctor came and noted the improvement. Baba had arranged everything for the benefit of Pradhan's mother. 'In two or four days it will be all right', Baba said. Actually in two days it was all right with Pradhan's mother. Baba's *antarjnana* and his blessing to the mother of Pradhan had this double advantage of first benefiting the devotees in the family and next of developing faith. So, every member of Pradhan's family went to Baba and got his blessing.

One night Das Ganu was performing his *kirtan* at Pradhan's mother's place. after that, Das Ganu went over to Santa Cruz, that is Pradhan's own place, and there sang *kirtans* from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. Listening to the kirtans, his wife got a burning desire to go to Shirdi at once. Baba came to her in a dream and this increased her desire. The question was if she went what was to be done with her sister-in-law, who was in an advanced state of pregnancy. Anyhow, she thought they would take risk, and so both the ladies started. Mr. Chandorkar received the ladies and Mr. Pradhan at Kopergaon station. Mr. Chandorkar was then getting an intermittent fever. At the time when he would be at Kopergaon for his return journey, the alternate day fever would come to him. so before leaving Shirdi he asked Baba's permission. Baba gave it, and the result was that when he came to Kopergaon he escaped the fever. He never again had that fever.

On the occasion of this visit, Baba pointing to Mrs. Pradhan said, 'This is going to be the mother of my Babu'. But Chandorkar thought that her sister-in-law being pregnant, the reference must be to her, and asked Baba, 'Is this the lady you mean?' pointing for the sister-in-law. Baba said, 'No. It is this' (pointing again to Mrs. Pradhan). It turned out that her sister-in-law had only a tumour and not a pregnancy. in 12 months from the time of Baba statement, Mrs. Pradhan delivered. Baba said it was Babu. When the child named Baba, because Baba said

LIFE OF SAI BABA

it was Babu, was taken to Shirdi, Baba took up the child and asked it, 'Babu where had you been. Where you vexed with me or weary of me?'

Baba gave Pradhan occasional proofs of his superhuman powers. On the first visit, when he was start back from Shirdi, there was a severe storm and rain for quarter of an hour, and if that continued, the streams between Shirdi and Kopergaon would swell up, and having no bridges, it would be impossible for him to get back to Kopergaon or Bombay. so Pradhan feared that Baba would not give him leave to start. But when he went to Baba for leave, Baba looked at the sky and said, '*Arre Allah, abhi Bursat Purakar, Mere Bal Bachhe Ghar jane Wala hai. Unku Sukse Janedhe*, that is O' God enough. Stop this rain. My children have to go back home. Let them go back without difficulty'. As Baba spoke these words, the rain becomes gentler and feeble. Pradhan was able to go from Shirdi to Kopergaon without any obstacle on the way. he caught the Punjab mail and took udhi and tirtha to his mother as stated already.

This help to Pradhan and his mother by his use of power over elements and nature can only be called divine. Baba when they started on this occasion, said, 'I will accompany you home'. That is to say that the whole journey would be safe and actually the journey was quite safe. on the night after his return, his sister-in-law dreamed that a fakir robed in kafni and wearing a towel on his head like Baba was in the house. that seemed to show the truth of Baba's statement that he would come to Pradhan's home.

Baba was fond of the child Babu, and when taken for his first birthday that is, the second visit after his birth, Baba bought two rupees worth of burfi and distributed it to all. Then Baba asked, 'Has the child no brother and no sister?' Mrs. Pradhan bashfully answered 'You gave us only this Babu'. But Baba's words were very significant. After Babu's birth, Mrs. Pradhan had one male child and one more daughter. To commemorate Baba's birthday, Pradhan gave an grand dinner at Shama's and all were invited. that was a Thursday. Baba Saheb Bhate excused himself from attending it saying that on Thursdays he avoided dining out. When he went to Baba that day, Baba asked him, 'have you eaten at Pradhan's? Baba Saheb Bhate said, 'Today is Thursday'.

Baba: What if?

Bhate: I do not dine out on Thursdays. That is my rule.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Baba: To please whom?

Bhate: To please you.

Baba: Then I tell you go and dine at Pradhan's. Though it was 4 p.m. Bhate came and dined at Pradhan's.

Mrs. Pradhan had a dream in Santa Cruz that Baba came to Santa Cruz and that she did *Pada puja*. Chandorkar interpreted it to mean that Baba wanted her to go on with regular *Pada puja* at home, and so asked her to go to Shirdi with silver *padukas*. Accordingly she went and placed two silver *padukas* on Baba's outstretched legs and took them away. Baba then said to Chandorkar, 'Nana, see this mother has cut off and carried away my feet'. This expresses his appreciation of her *paduka* worship. Ever since then, Baba's *paduka* are being worshipped at Pradhan's house.

Pradhan's last visit to Baba was in 1918. He had taken with him Rs. 3,800. But he overstayed his intended period at Shirdi, and Baba went on taking *dakshina* from him, and the result was that he had given Rs. 5,000, taking a loan of Rs. 1,200 from the veterinary doctor of Poona.

Baba was considered as Datta *Avatar* by Das Ganu and by those who heard his *kirtans* and by Pradhan also, of course. When Babu was ill at Santa Cruz, the family priest, one Madhav Bhat, was asked to look after the child, and he went on with his *mantra japa* and *puja*. But he said that illness was due to the fact that the family was now worshipping Baba, a Mohammedan saint, but Pradhan told him, 'Baba is not a Mohammedan saint. He is Datta *Avatar*'. Bhat was not convinced. Later, one night, he had a dream. There was a figure which, from the picture of the family, he recognised to be Baba, sitting on the top of the staircase in the house, holding a *Sota* in his hand. The figure said him, 'What do you mean? I am the lord of this house'. The priest did not mention it at once. But he made a vow that if really Sai Baba is Datta and all power, then he should cure this child and the child should improve sufficiently by 4 p.m. so as to be brought downstairs where Bhate was. The priest added he would then agree that Baba was and is Datta. This he uttered before Baba's photo. This was his prayer. Within a very short time of this prayer, the child's temperature was getting lower, and by 4 p.m. the child said, 'Let us go down and play'. His mother took him down, Madhav Bhat was then convinced that Baba was Datta, and he vowed he would pay him a *dakshina* of Rs. 120. So, the priest, Madhav Bhat, accompanied a group that went to Shirdi, and there Bhat paid Rs. 120. Shama was

LIFE OF SAI BABA

then with Baba. A little later, in the afternoon, Baba asked him 'Give me *dakshina*'; Shama said that Bhat had paid Rs. 120 in the morning. Baba said that he paid it to Datta, and added, 'Ask him'. Shama could not understand this. Afterwards Madhav Bhat explained to Shama the meaning of Baba's words that the sum of Rs. 120 was paid as a result of his vow that if Baba as Datta cured Pradhan's child, he would pay Rs. 120.

Madhav Bhat had no issue then. he vowed that he would pay Rs. 108 if he got a child. He vowed also that he would pay Rs. 1,008 if Pradhan's ambition should be achieved. With these vows in mind, he went to Baba and paid Rs. 108. Shama said, 'He is giving this large sum of Rs. 108. Baba said, 'What is that? He is giving me much more'. Baba showed his *antarjuna* of Bhat's vow to pay Rs. 1,008.

Baba attended to the spiritual side of Pradhan's wife, and showed his concern at her shortness of temper. He told her, 'If anyone talks ten words at us, let us reply only with one word. Do not quarrel or battle with anyone'. Baba, after receiving Rs. 5,000 from Pradhan, made some gestures which were not clear. They seemed to mean "Even if the heavens tumble down over you, do not fear. I am with you'.

When Pradhan left Shirdi in 1916, Baba said, *Tuja Garam Jha Bara Me yein*, meaning, 'You go home, I will go with you'. He was not visible, but the whole journey was pleasing, showing that Baba looked after their safety and comfort. there was no danger or difficulty.

After Baba passed away, Pradhan got the following benefits. He became a second class magistrate of South Salsette for six years, 1920-26. In 1926, he became a Justice of the Peace. Then he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council, 1921-23. He received the Sanad of Rao Bahadur in 1927.

Mrs. Pradhan gives some more instances of Baba's kindness. When her child Babu had measles, the doctor was feeling hopeless. She prayed to Baba. Baba appeared and said, 'Why weep? The child is all right. give him a good feed at 6.30 a.m.' The child began to play in the morning and the doctor was surprised.

One night, Baba appeared to Mrs. Pradhan in her dream and said, 'Are you sleeping? Get up. Your boy will have convulsions'. Then she got up. The boy at that time had no convulsions, but she kept hot water, fire, and *Eau de Cologne* ready. Three hours later, the boy woke up, and had convulsions. All the children in Pradhan's family have

LIFE OF SAI BABA

convulsions occasionally, and as everything was ready, in half an hour, the fit passed off.

Once when she went to the Masjid, she was afraid that Baba would get angry. That day Baba said, 'See, I do not get angry with anyone.'

Once while she was doing *puja* at the Mosque, Baba stopped her and said, 'Go back to your quarters'. She went back and found her Babu was crying and that there was no one to look after the child. Then she went and pacified the child, and returned. Baba then said, 'Now do your *puja*'. So, Baba from the Mosque was keeping a watchful and kindly eye over all his devotees and their families, and looking after them. *Mungiki Pav me Avaj Hove, Obhi Sai sunta hai*. This means, 'Sai hears even the ant's footfall'. Once she was taking a convalescent boy to Shirdi against the doctor's advice. The child was ill in the train. the child could not sit up and had to lie down. She feared that people would laugh at her conduct. when the child was taken up to Baba the child stood up before Baba, and was all right in health. Baba said, 'People would not laugh now'.

On 15-10-1918, that is, on the day of Baba's *Mahasamadhi* she saw in her dream Baba's body, and said, 'Baba is dying'. Baba replied, 'Saints do not die. They take *Mahasamadhi*'. Subsequent news confirmed the fact that Baba passed away on that day.

BABA'S CONTACT WITH MUSLIMS

A reader who has read so far the life of Baba might be curious to learn whether Muslims got into contact with Baba and if so who were they, what they thought of him, what benefits they obtained and what other Muslims can now obtain from Baba. This is fairly practical and important. Baba drew no distinction between Hindu and Muslim and from the very beginning wished to bring together to himself so as to overcome their mutual differences and dislikes and enable them to work together, individually and nationally. This question is rather closely connected with Baba's being a Hindu or a Muslim, and that question cropped up very frequently when people came to meet Baba for the first time. With the information at our disposal, we can see according to Baba's own statement, that he had a Hindu birth, corroborated by his pierced ears. No Muslim male child get its ears bored. And from Baba's own mouth, we have the further information that his parents gave him away when he was a very tender child to the fakir who brought him up. So, the contact with Muslim starts from Baba when he was a tender babe. The question as to who the *fakir* was cannot be solved now. But what he was, may be inferred. He was the resident of a place fairly near Patri. So far as qualities are concerned, it is fairly good inference, from Baba's frequent reference to the word *fakir* on important and to his giving him valuable directions and guidances that the person who took him away was a real *fakir*, and a great soul. He must have been highly pious, dispassionate and full of *vairagya*. These qualities must have been imbibed by the tender child Baba even in his early years. Baba must have learnt to look upon that *fakir* as his *Guru-God*. Baba used the word fakir in the following cases, namely to denote God or Guru-God. who was constantly watching him and guiding him. The fakir who took charge of him must

LIFE OF SAI BABA

have been in all probability a Sufi. Sufis attain the state of trance, and in that condition adopt the Mahavakya *Aham Brahmasmi* in its Arabic form is *Anal Haq* to express their condition. *Anal Haq* was occasionally uttered by Baba. Some devotees say that Baba never uttered it, but that does not prove anything more than that those devotees and their friends had not heard it from Baba. But, if one devotee positively says that he heard *Anal Haq*, that is more valuable than 10 devotees negatively saying that they did not hear. *Anal Haq* is the Arabic form of words which may people have heard Baba utter. Baba has said in general terms that he is *Allah* or God. In particular, he has referred to himself being the various facets of God, that is, Laxmi Narayan, Ganapati and Maruti. Baba has himself said that all these – Maruti, Ganapati, Vittal, Ram are *Allah*. So Baba's saying *Anal Haq* is not improbable. It is only his occasional use of Arabic terms to convey what he often said in Hinustani or Urdu *Maim Allahum*. Baba was not constantly using Arabic or Persian in later days. But at the commencement he was known to be singing songs in strange languages (as Arabic and Persian would have seemed to his listeners at the Shirdi Takia) and also dancing with tinklets tied round his anklets and kanjira in his hand. Apart from question of language, the ideas in which Baba was thoroughly soaked in upto the last were in no way distinguishable from Sufism. Sufism stressed the following important points, namely our ego is a misleading and a disadvantageous entity and our true progress lies in merging the ego in the personality of the Supreme and coming to feel with the certainty of conviction that all action apparently done by us is really done by God, that is, the feeling that God is the sole actor, and the *Guru* is the only *Sadhana* needed. The *Guru* works not by preaching, teaching, and other similar methods, but purely by the force of love and mystic power. Through his soul-force, the *Guru* grips the sishya's soul, absorbs him into himself, shapes him, moulds him, and vests him with all knowledge and power and makes him like himself. *Apana Sarika karitit Tatkal*. These features once noticed in Baba's account of his own dealings with his own *Guru*, and with people like Upasani Baba, whom he wanted to mould perfectly. All things considered, one may very well take it that the *fakir* that Baba referred to, was the *fakir* who took charge of him in his earliest years and who developed him into the pure child that came immediately under the care of Gopal Rao Desmukh alias Venkusa. Here we see Baba's destiny. From Hindu parentage he passed to Muslim hands and from Muslim care again to a Hindu saint's care. The fusion of Hindu and Muslim had to be perfected first in his own person before he could effect any fusion of the Hindu-Muslim elements in society. We may well note how the conflicts are resolved when the two trends are mixed up in himself. The

LIFE OF SAI BABA

predominant note in Islam is unity of God and the predominant feature of Hinduism is multiplicity of Gods. As we go into any Hindu home directly, we see a number of images representing a number of deities, namely, Rama, Krishna, Tirupati Venkatesa, Maruti, Datta, Lakshmi, Subbaraya, Ganapati, and so on. The Hindu's revel in all the mythology connected with all these forms and the *puja* is a full of reference to all the peculiarities and the mythological stories about all these, whereas to a Muslim mind, all such mythology, all such differentiation, is an anathema. He must think of only one God and the most fundamental and first dictum of Islam is 'There is no God but God and Muhammed is his prophet'. That is, there is only one God and there is no use of thinking other entities as God. On the contrary, in Hinduism the tendency is to look upon one entity after another as God. Max Muller coined the word Henotheism to denote this tendency, that is, everything is God by turns.

Namaste Vayo Twameva Pratyaksham Brahma Asi

this means, I bow to Thee, O Vayu, you are the visible God. Similarly, other forms are addressed as *Pratyaksham Brahma*, such as Fire, Sun, Water and apart from these, human personalities are to be worshipped and treated as God. The parents are first to be worshipped as God, *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava*. A Muslim cannot understand any of these dicta. Similarly, we may say *Athithi Devo Bhava*. Treat your guests especially, uninvited guests, as God. This is something which non-Hindus cannot understand. But amidst these dicta found in *Taittiriya Upanishad*, there is one which might be accepted by Hindus and Muslims to some extent, that is *Acharya Devo Bhava*. This means, 'Treat your *Guru* as God.' In Sufism, the *Guru* is the only God that the pupil is to have his mind. He must be swallowed up in the contemplation of his *Guru* and in the appreciation of his love, and think of nothing else. And this course is the same as the *Taittiriya* ordinance, *Acharya Devo Bhava*. Now, luckily for Baba, when he passed from his Sufi *fakir's* care to Venkusa's care, this element of *Acharya Devo Bhava*, common to Sufism and Hinduism proved to be his sheet anchor. His course for ten or twelve years under Venkusa is described by him in his own words with great glow of love and appreciation. The *Guru* wanted nothing but his love and in turn he wanted nothing but the *Guru*. So, for years and years he gazed on his *Guru* with love and completely forgot everything else in the world. That is the concentration that the Sufis want and that is the concentration, which yields the highest results in *Prema Marga*, emphasized by Lord Chaitanya and others. So, luckily the change from the *fakir* to Venkusa did not involve any serious change in Baba's method of progress. The

LIFE OF SAI BABA

sadhana was the same and the *sadhya*, the result was the same. The result was losing oneself in the Bliss of love. When for ten to twelve years Baba had gone through that course, with his Brahmin *Guru*, the development started already under the *fakir* was only ripening more and more. Hence the fusion of Hindu-Muslim was practically effected in his case by stressing the essence of both. The essence of both Sufism and *Bhakti marga* is development by love to reach the goal, which is perfect Satchitananda or love. Hence, in his own case, by providential arrangement, the fusion had become perfect and Baba often referring to God or *Guru* could use with equal felicity the word *Allah* or *fakir* or Hari. Baba has used all these terms and we shall see in his later life, he was having *nama japa* or concentration upon what he called indifferently either Allah smarana or Hari nama smarana. Ordinarily, the *Fakirs* or persons that we come across do not use both terms interchangeably. But in Kabir we have got an excellent instance of such identification or fusion. Kabir, according to Baba was his former *Avatar* and Kabir became the *Guru* or the chief of the *Gurus* of the Sufi sect who placed Kabir's poems in the forefront of their *sadhanas* for spiritual advance. Kabir's songs were sung by Baba especially in his earlier days at the takia and were referred to by him in his later talks 'Hari bole, Hari bole, Bayi' is the first line of a very well-known song of Kabir. There we see that all the highest associations of Godhead are brought into the Name *Hari*. Baba included Kabir amongst his inspiring agencies, and once said, Kabir was my Guru. Baba stated at Shirdi later that he went on with *Hari nama japa* and *Allah Smarana* and that Hari descended from the Vishnu Sahasranama (which he placed upon his chest for overcoming the troubles of his heart) into his heart, and that thereafter he got relief. He said to H. S. Dixit that he went on saying Hari, Hari, and Hari appeared before him. Thereafter he stopped giving medicine and went on giving *udhi* only. All who had his spiritual guidance also learnt to identify Hari with *Allah*.

When Baba left Venkusa and went and settled at Shirdi after some travels he had reached a condition in which this fusion was perfect. He appeared to be a Muslim *Fakir*, but Hindus support him and appreciated him, especially Hindu saints whom he used to meet and converse with, namely Devidas and Janakidas. His highly advanced concentration naturally resulted in several psychic powers and these drew the attention of those coming into contact with him. He was highly appreciated by saints from Poona and Sheagaon. During the course of his life, several apparently Hindu saints like Madhavanath Maharaj, Gajanan of Sheagaon and Datta Maharaj sent their men to be influenced by and taken care of by them. This is very good proof that Baba was not treated as an iconoclastic Muslim whom Hindus should

LIFE OF SAI BABA

keep aloof from. When he first entered Shirdi, Mahlsapathy mistook him for such a Muslim. But Baba, when he came along with Chand Bhai Patel's party to Shirdi, considered that Khandoba's temple was a proper residence for him, he having been trained under a great Venkusa *bhakta*, and having no anti Hindu tendencies. He considered that he could readily mix with saints. Mahlsapathy prevented him from entering into the temple, though under a mistaken impression, had a very good result. He was obliged to go and live under a tree and finally at the mosque where he was given the opportunity to carry on this work of fusion from a Mosque itself. The published accounts of Baba's experiences give us hundreds of cases of Hindus who took him to be a Mohamman, but still found him to be fit to be considered their God, and therefore his being a Muslim in dress or using language of Hinduism or Urdu, or in his reference to *Allah* did not prevent them from worshipping him as their god or *Guru*. At first he tried to prevent their worship on himself but finally agreed to it and developed it, as this was part of the mission he had come to earth to fulfill. Getting Hindus to worship him at the Mosque was a great feat and he achieved it. But this was only half the problem. The counterpart of it was getting Muslims also to recognise him as their Godman. How far he succeeded in this we shall now consider.

Providence enabled him to have facilities for this purpose. Though losing himself in God and attaining *Ritambara* Prajna or Pratibha or knowledge of everything near and remote; past, present and future; here, there and everywhere was an undoubted help to his impressing people, whether Hindus or Muslims, to accept him as their God, had its characteristic obstacles. The Hindus were in a large majority and so though externally the mass of Hindus considered him as a Muslim, he was worshipped as a Hindu God or Hindu Guru-God in the Mosque. Now, how were the Muslims to treat such a person? He was an *Avilia*, a person with numerous siddhis and one who had developed himself wholly to the service of God and of humanity. But what was the proper course for Muslims to adopt towards him? Every person, be he Muslim or Hindu, when in distress or want, needs help. This powerful *Avilia* was rendering help, spiritual and also material. He was showering food and wealth upon a large number of persons and at the same time, showing his powers of reading the hearts of people and of controlling human and other beings, and even the forces of Nature. A Muslim also naturally reveres such a person with such powers. So, the Muslims had to decide in what way they should deal with such an *Avilia* in a Mosque. If he was a Muslim he was a very heterodox Muslim. The ordinary Muslim will not tolerate any Hindu God or God's portraits or images or rituals connected with Hindu gods. But Baba encouraged all

LIFE OF SAI BABA

these, and allowed Gokulashtami and *Ram Navami* to be celebrated at his Mosque with din and bustle. Along with the *Ram Navami* celebrations the Muslim ceremony of *Sandal* also went on at the mosque. The Muslims took out Sandal and went on applying *Sandal* paste with their palms to various objects. This idea of Sandal procession originated with one Mr. Amir Shakkar Dalal, a Mohammadan Bhakta of Korahla. This procession is held in honour of great Muslim saints. *Sandal*, that is, chandan paste and scrapping are put in the *Thali* and these are carried with incense burning before them in procession to the accompaniment of band and music through the village and then after returning to the Masjid, the contents of the dishes are thrown with hands on the *Nimbar* and walls of the *Masjid*. This work was managed by Mr. Amir Shakkar for the first three years and then afterwards by his wife. So, on one day, the procession of the Flags by the Hindus and that of *Sandal* by the Muslims went on side by side and are still going on without any hitch. This ceremony was held on *Ram Navami* day side by side with the Hindu celebration, and the two standards at the Mosque were gaily decorated and carried in procession throughout the streets of Shirdi, both by Hindus and Muslims. This *Ram Navami* celebration is an excellent illustration of how he was able to get Hindus and Muslims together at his feet. But the orthodox section whether of Hindus or of Muslims have their own insuperable difficulties. The extreme orthodox Hindu would not so much as step into a Mosque or bow to a Muslim or give him dakshina. Baba noticed and overcame this inhibition in numerous people who came to him. When Megha, Upasani Sastri, Mule Sastri and the South African doctor were asked to go to him, each one of them had this serious obstacle, the anti-Muslim sentiment to overcome. The Masjid is the last place to which an orthodox Brahmin would go and in a Mosque, under orthodox Muslim management, the presence of Hindu worshippers is neither expected nor relished. Yet, Baba so managed his mosque that his Hindu devotees were pouring in hundreds and thousands to worship him with all the religious ceremonials that Hinduism knows of. Therefore, Baba called his Mosque "A Brahmin's Mosque" and also named it *Dwarakamayee*. This, while attracting most Hindus, would still repel the orthodox Muslims and yet would not suffice to attract the orthodox Brahmin. But on the whole, the Hindu population in India especially in Mumbai and some other States, are far more advanced in education and far more tolerant in their culture and ideas than is generally believed, and great saints like Ramakrishna Paramahansa have widely scattered amongst the educated people and amongst the uneducated people, liberal notions of religion and God-head. More Hindus would naturally go to a Mohammadan saint who is not found to be an iconoclast and who is exercising his power

LIFE OF SAI BABA

beneficially to all devotees than Muslims to a Hindu saint. A few Mohammadans, who had known Swami Vivekananda's work like Rajab Ali Mohamed of Mumbai, appreciated Baba, and so had no prejudices, like the cultured and educated Hindus. But as for the others, their attitude towards Baba could not easily attain to the devotion of the Hindu devotees. In trying to give an account of the contact of Muslims with Baba, before and after his *Mahasamadhi*, this writer has encountered one great difficulty. A good number of Muslims no doubt swarmed to Baba because of the wealth he strewed about and the powers he displayed, but as for spiritual contacts, it was extremely difficult for the writer to find out even one person who had got into spiritual touch with Baba. Besides the statements of Rajab Ali who may be treated as a follower of Swami Vivekananda; and that of Chote Khan, there is no material of interest to get from Baba's Muslim devotees. So, it is worthwhile examining what Chote Khan says and then refer to other Muslims who have given statements to this author, which have been published in Devotees Experiences.

CHOTE KHAN

Imam Bhai Chote Khan, aged about 65 years and resident of Vajapur, Aurangabad district, told to His Holiness Pujyasri B. V. Narasimha Swamiji how he got into contact with Baba and how he became attached to him. Fakir Durvesh Shah told Chote Khan of Sai Baba in 1910, and asked him to go and see him and gave him some further direction. Soon, Chote Khan went to see Sai Baba. That was his first visit. Baba was then standing in a lane and a lady was bowing to him. As advised by Durvesh Shah, Chote Khan went and stood behind Baba and recited the first chapter of the Koran behind Baba's back. When he began it with Bismilla, Baba at once turned round and faced him and said angrily, 'Who are you? Why have you come to ask me about something as if you are my father?' Baba showered abuse on Chote Khan. Baba then went to the Mosque and uttered words, which Chote Khan could not understand. Chote Khan went and sat in front of the Masjid, as he could not get into it without Baba's permission. That permission was given only two days later. Kaka Dixit and others interceded on his behalf. In intercession, Dixit said pointing to Chote Khan, 'Baba, these children are yours. Why are you angry with them? Baba replied, 'You call him a child? He has beaten the master to death.' This referred to a recent escapade of Chote Khan, who was a Nizam's Sepoy in the Mamlatdar's office. Then he had beaten a Christian teacher or Master who had failed to give prompt information in a police investigation, at which this Chote Khan was assisting. The Master bled in the mouth and fell senseless. The Mamlatdar then advised Chote Khan to resign and go away. So, he resigned and ran away from the Nizam's State, but was still afraid that there might be prosecution, and that was one of the reasons why he visited Baba. That day Baba did not allow him. Two or three days later, one Kasim Bhai, son of Bade Baba, Jog and Dixit, all three took this Chote Khan

LIFE OF SAI BABA

up to the Mosque. Then Baba allowed him to take *darshan*. Baba said, 'Do not fear. *Allah Malik*, that is, there would be no prosecution.' He stayed on for a little less than two months after which Baba said, 'You go back safe. Your land dispute will be settled amicably.' This was one of the matters on which he wanted to consult Baba, namely, litigation then pending between him and his paternal aunt, who was also his mother-in-law. As Baba said, that litigation ended in his favour and he obtained possession of the lands.

His second visit to Shirdi was in the presence of Mahlsapathy and Maushy. As soon as he went in, Baba told Maushi, 'People do not listen to me. Rascals go away and suffer; by a thorn's injury and the parent dies.' This was a wonderfully accurate representation of what had happened to Chote Khan. At the close of the first visit, he went away without Baba's permission. Two days after he return home, his mother struck a thorn in her foot and died; evidently by reason of an infection it had turned septic and swollen. The fourth day after his mother's death, Chote Khan came to Shirdi, because he had no funds for her funeral ceremonies and no employment, and hoped that Baba would provide the funds. He stayed for 34 days or so. Then Baba said to Maushi in his presence, '*Udhi* must be received and then the man must go.' He thought that Baba was giving him leave because it is Baba's method to address one, while indirectly referring to another. Next morning, Baba extended his hands with *udhi* when Chote Khan approached him, and when giving *udhi*, Baba said, 'At the doorway of the house, there will be an old woman standing. She will give something, using which celebrations may be performed. Guests have come. Feast should be had in their company.' All this was Baba's *Antarjnana*, which Chote Khan could not make out then. But, when he went home to perform the fortieth day ceremony of his mother, a very old lady, the widow of the *Kazi*, was standing at his door and, out of love or friendship for him, paid Rs. 50 into his hands and said, 'Perform your ceremonies.' That was the fortieth day of his mother's death, corresponding to *Masik Shraadha*, and he found his four sisters with their husbands had come in his absence for that ceremony to his house. These were the guests mentioned by Baba. Baba knowing the burdens of Chote Khan had provided funds for the ceremony and helped a *bhakta* relying solely upon him.

In his fourth visit, Baba said to him, 'Gulab has come to your house.' When he went back, he learnt that his wife had recently been delivered of a male child. That must be the Gulab mentioned by Baba, and the boy was named Gulab.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

In his later visits to Baba, Baba did not allow him to return when he wanted to. So, Chote Khan was impatient to get started. Baba when refusing permission said, 'People should not go, if they go, there will be storms and balls of fire and immense trouble.' This was spoken by Baba talking in general terms and did not appear to refer to him. So, he went on running or walking at 5 miles an hour and reached Vari, 12 miles away at 5.50 p.m. Then he went by the bank of Vari to Surala. It was then sunset. The Patel warned him, 'Do not go. The weather is cloudy. If you go, you will suffer'. But Chote Khan said, 'It is only four miles more to my village, and I will go.' He went on. After he went three miles, a big storm came and lightning fell upon a huge pipal tree close to him and in front of him. The tree crashed and broke into two and fire broke out in the tree. His eye sight was dazed and he turned his face back. Then he saw Baba standing behind him with two tawny dogs. He bowed to Baba. Baba disappeared. Then he went on. There was a river near his village. He went to cross it not knowing its depth. He felt the water only knee-deep, but when he reached the other shore and looked back, he saw in full flood overflowing its banks. He was amazed how he had crossed it. The depth of the water might have been 20 feet. How he could cross river 20 feet deep with water, he could not imagine. But he reached home safe. So, Baba's warning about the storm and ball of fire and trouble were all true, but Baba followed and saved him.

In 1936 Chote Khan was again badly in need of money to get Gulab married. So, he went to Baba and slept in the Mosque. In his dream, Baba blessed him and said, 'If you go to Poona, you will be benefitted.' So, he started off to Poona. One Mr. Ladkar, suffering from severe piles, came to him. Chote Khan told him that he knew of a saint Sa Baba's prescription that would cure piles. Ladkar said, 'Give it'. Chote Khan then prepared the remedy and that relieved the man greatly. He went at once, and betting on horses at the races in Poona he got Rs. 1,100. Out of that he gave Chote Khan Rs. 700 and with that money Gulab's marriage was performed

Baba on another occasion uttered words referring to the termination of his own fleshly life. Baba said:

*Laila illilah
Kya Bada Darbar hai
Munshiji to Andai hai
Sardarji Chuthai, Allah Malik Hai,
Alla Acha Karega.*

LIFE OF SAI BABA

As he said these, he was pointing to the Buty wada, which was then in construction in 1917-18. It was that Buty wada which is the *Bada durbar* now, and the *Munshijis* and *Sardars* are all coming here.

In 1918, some months before Baba passed away, Baba made some preparations for the approaching termination of life. According to the Islamic practice, Baba made the following preparation. To Baba's son Kasim, Baba gave some Poli with boiled fowls. Then Baba told him, 'Go to Aurangabad and see *Fakir* Shamsuddin Mian. Give him this Rs. 250. Let him do *Moula Kowali* and *Nyas*. *Moula* is the vocal singing of songs about *Paigambar*, *Kowali* is beating the tabla and singing songs about saints, and *Nyas* is preparing food and distributing it to people. Then Kasim was to go to Banne Mian *Fakir* to garland him and to tell him,

Navdin, Nav tarik: Allah Meyane Apna Dhunia Lagaya, Merji Allaki.

This means, 'Ninth day. *Allah* himself takes away the lamp, which *Allah* has placed. Such is *Allah's* mercy'. Saying this, Baba handed over Rs. 250 and one garland of *Javandi* flowers. But as Kasim pleaded that he was a stranger at Aurangabad, Baba asked Chote Khan to accompany him. So, these two went along with a servant of Kasim, namely Ameer, and when they were at Aurangabad station, *Fakir* Shamsuddin, whom Chote Khan knew, had come to the station. He asked, 'Who are the guests that have come from Sai *Fakir*'. Chote Khan and also Kasim then prostrated. Then Shamsuddin himself repeated the words of Baba word by word, just as they were delivered at Shirdi. He took these three to his house at the fort and fed them. Then the Rs. 250 which Baba gave were handed over. Then he did *Nyas*, that is, feeding a large number of people with it. He also performed *Kawali*, which is beating of the *tabla*, and *Moula* – that is vocal music. By night all this was completed. The next part of their duty was to go to Banne Mian's house. Next morning they reached that house. There Mian was standing with one arm raised and one arm held down. The Arabs there at the spot told Chote Khan and his friends not to approach Banne Mian as he would fly at them. They waited for one hour, and then Chote Khan plucked up courage, took Baba's garland in one hand and put it round Mian's neck. Then Banne Mian lowered his upraised arm also. Then Chote Khan repeated the words,

Navdin, Navtarik : Allah Meyane Apna Dhunia Lagaya, Merji Allaki.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Banne Mian gazed into the sky and tears rolled down his eyes. He felt a slight sadness evidently at the approaching loss of Sai from the living world. four months after that, Baba passed away. *Navdin Navtarik* meant ninth day of the ninth month. Baba's passing away was on the 9th day of the 9th month. Baba knew Arabic and Urdu and had taught the *Koran* to Abdul.

The experience of a few other people with Baba, are still interesting, though they have no particular moral bearing, and are recited by Chote Khan to show Baba's *Antarjnana* and helpfulness. He mentions the following about a *Risaldar*, a regiment horse soldier by the name Nuruddin. He came to Baba one day and wanted leave to go back. Baba did not give him leave. Baba said, 'Go to-morrow'. But Nuruddin and rest of the regiment were marching on and so he could not stay. Then Baba gave him *udhi* and spoke in Urdu words which meant, 'Dig a pit and eat the *udhi*'. The man took the *udhi* and rode away. At Kopergaon he saw a corpse being carried, and then in due course he reached his destination. from that time, he had always a vision of the corpse before his eyes. On the days, when he had such a vision, he got food and was happy. On other days, try as he might, he could not get food. This mortified him and he gave up service in disgust. Thinking that Baba was responsible for this, he came back to Baba and stayed at Shirdi for six months. Then this curse left him. Taking leave of Baba, he then went away. he became a happy grocery shopkeeper at Deolali. Another case of Baba's influence mentioned by Chote Khan is that of one Abdul Khader.

Abdul Khader came to Baba in about 1915, and he was at the Takia. Baba passed that side. Khader then begged Baba, 'Give me *Fakir*, I want to become a saint.' Baba then stood in front of him and with folded palm, flung the palm at him as though he was flinging something at him. But nothing visible was thrown. after that Khader's manner and talk were changed. He began to give moral advice and behave like Baba, sometimes picking up a stone and threatening to throw it. Sometimes, he got unmanageable. For a month and a half this went on. he was a mad *Fakir*. Thereafter, Khader's relations began to get disgusted with Khader's condition. And one day Baba stood before Khader at the mandap of the Mosque and drew his folded palm from Khader's side to himself, as though he was pulling back something, and said, '*Lav Bale Ither*'. Then Khader got back his original state of mind, and stayed on for 15 days more. Getting Baba's permission he went to Kirkee and started a *bidi* business, and was flourishing.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

People were doing Moula everyday during day time before Baba at the Mosque; and *Kowali* with *tabla* and sarangi. Baba ordered a tabal to be constructed at the *mandap* and paid for it. Baba prepared *kichadi* with mutton. The *tabla* was stopped after the *mandap* was prepared. Baba was either pronouncing *fatia* himself or getting it pronounced by some others. Muslims always came for *Idga* to the Mosque. Baba occasionally pronounced *Namaz* at the Mosque near the fire without, however, bending the knee or prostrating. He pronounced the *Namaz* when the fire was prepared in the pit at the *mandap* and thrown at Muslim bodies.

Chote Khan then mentions the names of two muslims who got spiritual uplift from Baba. Ine was Sheik Abdulla of Vajpur, that is Chota Khanta village. Baba spoke to him about *vairagya*. Baba said, "If you die today, the third day's ceremony follows and people thereafter forget you. What is the use of house, and land to us? Sheik Abdullah had only a wife and a child, and getting *vairagya*, left his house and property to them, and wandered in the streets. He spent his nights at tombs muttering something. He lived upon what people gave him and if he got nothing, he starved. This he did for 10 or 12 years and died. During those 12 years, he developed wonderful powers. For instance on one occasion he asked Chote Khan not to go on his journey, for a particular place, which he mentioned, there would be a serpent. But it was daylight and Chote Khan did not care. Exactly at the place mentioned by Sheik Abdulla, Chote Khan found the serpent.

Abbas Sait, a bidi seller told Abdulla, "Why are you behaving like a mad man, deserting wife and child?" Abdullah replied, "You yourself will come to know." Then Abdulla flung his closed fist in the air as though he he threw something at Abbas Sait, uttering the words, "You also become like me." From that time, Abbas Sait gave up his *bidi* business, home and relations and was wandering about.

In Bhopal of Warhad lived one Anwar Khan and he came to Baba, and said, 'I do not want samsara'. He lived at Shirdi in the chavadi for 12 days. Baba gave him a *mantra*,

Bismilla Kuliya hiyo Valkafirono nabudo mabudana.

that is, in Chapter 1 of Koran, Baba told him to repeat this 101 times at midnight. Thereafter, he was to recite Davut. Then Baba gave him *peda* as prasad. Haji Kasim of Bombay provided him with a free passage to Arabia. He was then returned. It is one of the five duties of

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Muslims to go and visit Mecca, and Baba helped this man to perform that duty.

Muhammad Ka, a Rohilla of Nevasu, was with Baba. Once he lifted the curtain to see who was talking with Mahlsapathy. Strange to say, he could not see Baba, though Baba was there. Then he grew queer and crazy. His younger brother came to Shirdi to take him. Then Baba gave *udhi* to him and sent him back, and then he became all right.

About 1936, Chote Khan and Madhav Fasle were at the Mosque one night. Chote Khan heard Baba's voice 'Ye Madhav, Get up, I want to pass urine.' But Madhav in his sleep did not get up. Early in the morning, both of them found in the hollow at the place where Baba used to sit, scented water. The hollow was filled with water. Baba had passed urine, and it had become scented water!

One Anwar Khan, an Ahmednagar Kazi, wanted to rebuild a *Masjid* at Telikakoot and came to Baba for Funds. After waiting for three days, he was told by Baba, 'The *Masjid* will not accept any money from you or from others. The *Masjid* herself would provide the funds.' Dig three feet under the *Nimbar*, and there is a treasure there. With that rebuild the *Masjid*. Then Kazi went, dug and found the treasure there. with that rebuilt the *Masjid*. Then he came back to Shirdi and told all the people including Chote Khan of the above facts.

One Maddu Shah, a Fakir at Meron in Jalgaon in Kandesh, came to Shirdi around 1913. He asked Baba, 'Give me Rs. 700.' He cried and cried. then Baba told Bapu Saheb Jog, 'Give him Rs. 700. Jog brought Rs. 700 silver coins and placed them before Baba. Baba told tow boys, Lakshman and Gulab, 'Take this money and give it to the *Fakir*.' These two boys took the money, but they handed over only Rs. 500 to the *Fakir*. And the Fakir wept and cried, 'I have been given only Rs. 500.' For two or three days he went on grumbling. Baba kept quiet. After that, Baba give him *udhi*, and this man went out. Baba said nothing to him, but when this man was walking on, near Nimgam, two miles away from Shirdi, a tonga came up. One Irus Shah, a Parsi *Tahsildar* in the Nizam's state got down from the *tonga* and told the *Fakir*, 'You take this food and take this Rs. 200. Are you now content?' Then Irus Shah came to Shirdi to Taty Patil's new house, and told the people that in a dream Baba told him 'You come by tonga to Shirdi. On the way you will see a *Fakir* near Nimgam carrying tiger skin. Then alight and give him food and Rs. 200, for which he is pining.' In accordance with that dream, Irus Shah said, 'I found the fakir and gave him Rs. 200 and food.'

LIFE OF SAI BABA

From Lazur in Nizam's State a Muslim came to Baba and said that he urgently needed Rs. 400 or Rs. 500. Baba told him 'Go and sit under the *Vatam* for motions. There a vessel full of coins will be found by you.' The next morning, he passed motions, and went to wash himself and stumbled upon a very heavy vessel, evidently full of treasure. He could not lift it. So, he came back to Baba at the *chavadi*. But when he returned back to the place, he could not find the treasure. Baba said, Ganukadu of Ruihad, who was coming in a cart, found it and took it away in his cart. So, nothing can be done. That Ganukadu became rich and Lazur went back in grief and poverty. So, here are Muslims experiences showing what Baba did to serve or help Muslims.

ABDUL

Of the Muslims who came to Baba, the one about whom the greatest amount of information is available and who is revered by large numbers of Sai devotees, is Abdul. Abdul is the one Muslim who permanently attached himself to Baba for nearly thirty years during Baba's life in the flesh and for thirty six years after *Mahasamadhi*, sticking on to Baba, and living upon the doles he got from the public. Abdul was born in about 1871 and died in April 1954. He was a native of Nanded on the banks of Tapti. When he was very young, and under the care of Fakir Amiruddin of Nanded, Sai Baba appeared in the dream of that *Fakir*, and gave him two mangoes telling him to give the fruits to Abdul and send Abdul to Shirdi. Accordingly the Fakir told him of that dream, gave the fruits and directed him to go to Sai Baba of Shirdi. So, he came in his 20th year, about 1890, to Baba. At that time even Nana Saheb Chandorkar had not come to Baba. Baba welcomed him at Shirdi with these words: *Mera Kabla Ala*, that is, 'My crow has come.' Baba directed him to devote himself entirely to his service. So, his work was to feed the five perpetually burning oil lamps, such as those at the *Lendi*, the *Masjid* and the *chavadi* and to keep them lighted.

As for the food, at first Baba did not give him any food. Baba himself was going out begging, and Abdul for himself. He lived at the stable near the *Masjid*. He was always by Baba's side rendering service. He read the Koran sitting near Baba at the Mosque. Baba occasionally opened the Koran and made him read or rather recite passages at which he opened the book. He occasionally quotes passages from the Koran. Abdul went on writing down what Baba was saying, and Abdul

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Shows a note book in Marathi and Modi script which contain Baba's utterances. That is Abdul's Koran. Everything which fell from Baba's lips is sacred and is enshrined in that book.

Abdul stuck on to Baba right up to the end, doing all menial and even scavenging services. After Baba passed away, he was the one Muslim in the establishment, and his work was to decorate the tomb of Baba, arrange the clothes and the flowers on it, and to receive first *prasad* for his sustenance. As for his record note book he had got full faith that what Baba said was sufficient to guide him and every one. When anybody wanted to know about the future or about any problem and came to him, he consulted this book and the answer came out of the page opened. This proved to be effective. This is the gift of prophecy, which he got by Baba's grace.

He gives two instances of such prophetic consultation. In the Sai *Mandir*, a well was dug. The water proved brackish. Baba was in *Mahasamadhi* at that time. So, Abdul consulted Baba's book of sayings. The reply he got was, "If deeper the well is dug the water will become sweeter". Accordingly the well was dug deeper by 2 feet, and the water was not brackish.

Another instance was this: Barrister Gadgil wanted to know if his son would come back from England and where he would stay then. After consultation, Abdul said, "He will return". And so, he did return with his English wife and children. So, he says he has used this manuscript book as his Koran. He goes on reading reverently, gets absorbed in it and rolls beads in his hands at the same time.

Nanda deepam or the perpetual lamp at the Lendi is now in 1936 covered by a pillar. But when he was maintaining it, it was only a pit. There was nothing above to protect it, and on its four sides 20 pieces of cloth were tied and the hole was covered with zinc sheet. Baba used to sit behind that lamp and ordered him to fill up two pots with water and place them near him. Baba would pour out water in various directions from those pots. Why that was done, Abdul could not say, nor whether any mantra accompanied the action. Except Abdul no one else would be present when Baba scattered the water. Abdul said, "Except myself no other Mohammadan was reading the Koran or any other Holy book sitting by Baba's side. Baba would occasionally utter sacred words. And all of them were noted in that book. By Baba's order or permission, Abdul took them all down. It can now be read either Narasimha Swamiji or any other devotee. This script is neither Devanagari nor Modi.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Abdul used this book not merely for daily reading but also for prophecy. Abdul died in April 1954 and till then, he was in the establishment of the Sai Sansthan. Abdul had great faith in Baba, and would give *udhi* with Baba's grace to many and help them achieving their objects such as cure of diseases. As he was for 66 years, either the bodyguard of Baba or the attendant on his tomb, he is esteemed as the *Hanuman* of Baba; constantly attending on the *Guru*, never expecting any payment or reward, but simply out of faith sticking on to his master. His was noble example of complete and perfect devotion and active service with fullest faith, that is *Nishta* in the *Guru*. He had both *Nishta* and *Saburi* and Baba on occasions, told him, 'Arre, what are you going to have? You are going to live in storeyed houses and terraced houses. You will have a glorious time.' Abdul lived for some time in Buty's *wada* upstairs and he commanded the respect of a very wide circle of Hindus and Muslims.

Baba used to give Abdul excellent advice fitting him for a *yogi's* life. Baba told him, 'Eat very little. do not go in for a variety of eatables. One sort of dish will suffice. Do not sleep much.' Abdul followed this advice. He kept awake all night, and in a kneeling posture kept repeating his Koran, that is, Baba's words. He was meditating on them. Baba said, 'Have *Dhyan* on what is read and think Who am I.' This might have been beyond the capacity of Abdul.

One night, he says, he was tired and tired to sleep, and held his palms in front of him to rest his drowsy head. Baba then said, 'Are you trying to see the moon?' That night when he fell asleep, he fell upon Baba and his *gaddi*. Baba gently stroked his feed, and then he awoke. The next day when he took water in his palms and looked at it, there was a big moon in that water. It was 2 p.m. This was what Baba had spoken of.

A zinc sheet was placed on the top of the *pandal* which protected the *Lendi* lamp. Twenty pieces of curtain cloth were tied all round the lamp to form something like a tent round it, and Abdul looked after the lamp, which was in the centre. That light has been shifted from its place now and is put inside a raised pillar of brick and mortar, containing a chamber for the lamp. Baba would get up from near the lamp and walk a few yards in each direction gazing intently into the distance evidently supervising with a parental eye the devotees in each of those directions.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Abdul's services were washing clothes in the streamlet at the village boundary, sweeping the Mosque, the *chavadi* and the surrounding places, lighting the lamps in these buildings, feeding them with oil and sweeping the village streets and removing the nightsoil from the way of Baba. That was why Baba called him, *Halalkoor* and 'My *Mirambi*'. He fetched water and also engaged himself in sundry services.

Baba protected Abdul by providing him with food and ensured his safety and progress. About 1927, that is, 11 years after Ramakrishna Ayi's death, in the *Sala*, which she had occupied. Abdul was once reciting the Koran. Suddenly three walls of that dilapidated mud building collapsed, and Abdul was buried waist deep in the debris. But Baba saved him from harm. Abdul's first *Guru* had sent him no doubt to Baba, but later that *Guru* came to Shirdi and wanted him to go back. But Abdul pleaded that nothing could be done without Baba's permission. Baba not having given the permission, the former *Guru* went away from Shirdi.

Baba sometimes used to give blessings concealing them under abuse and violence. Baba beat Abdul and Jog many times. Baba said to Abdul *Tereku, Dhariaku, Par uttar Dhea, tera Matti Sona Banadiya Kyabadi Madi Bandhya*. this means, 'I have enabled you to cross the oceans. Your earth, that is mud body, has been turned into gold. What a high storeyed building?' Like this Abdul had various blessings and prophecies, and Baba sat with Abdul at the *chavadi* in the morning before he started for the Mosque. Abdul's statement about *Avatars*, his book shows, has reference to all the *Dasa Avatars*, and there is a hint that Baba treated himself as one of the avatars. Baba also prophesied that the British Empire in India, would have only nine rulers in India. In 1947, evidently at the time of the ninth king, India passed out of British jurisdiction.

The remaining devotees who have given statements are just a few, namely Rajabali Mohamed, Abdul Rangari, Thanadar and Adam Dalali. Of these Rajabali Mohamed, being educated and a *Khoja*, having read Swami Vivekananda's lectures and books, has something useful to say about Baba. He regards Baba as a great saint with vast powers, which are possible only to those who have got *Atma jnana*. he went to Shirdi, because he had some business at Nasik and that business was delayed. So, during the time when there was no work at Nasik, he visited Shirdi which is not far from Nasik. When he went and presented Baba with a coconut and sugar candy, Baba did not ask him for *dakshina*. Rajabali Mohamed asked leave of Baba to go away. Baba said, "That man is not yet ready to deliver your goods" , showing that

LIFE OF SAI BABA

the Nasik man was not yet ready for completing his business contract. So, Rajabali Mohamed spent two or three days in Baba's company.

Rajabali Mohamed only wanted to strengthen his faith and he wanted that at the time his death, he may have full *imam* or faith, so that he might be sure of good end. So, he prayed to Baba mentally for it. Baba then placed his hand on his head and blessed him. Rajabali Mohamed's faith steadily increased. He got great benefit from faith in him and faith in *udhi*. For example, in 1931, his buffalo was in great travail trying to calve. Pained at her suffering Rajabali Mohamed sent for the Veterinary surgeon. He tried his best, but to no purpose. Then at once Rajabali Mohamed took Baba's *udhi*, placed some *udhi* on the head of the buffalo and hoped that Baba would come to its aid. In ten minutes, she safely calved. There was no more trouble. In several other cases similarly, he used Baba's *udhi* with great success. He takes a bit of it, applies it over his chin, eyes, forehead and thinks of Baba. Then all his difficulties are removed. So, Rajabali Mohamed feels convinced that Baba is a saint of vast powers. He feels convinced also that Baba continues after *Mahasamadhi* to exercise that power.

According to Islamic tradition, saints do not die. They only pass from one state to another. Rajabali Mohamed has seen Tajuddin Baba of Nagpur and Baba Jan of Poona. They had given him earthly benefits. They also strengthened his *imam* or faith. being in the company of a saint is better than saying a hundred prayers. he keeps Baba's porcelain statue and a picture of Baba in his family house. Scented sticks are burnt before them on Thursdays.

The other Muslims who contacted Baba are all worldly people, namely Abdul Rahim, Adama Dalali and Abdulla Jan.

ABDUL RAHIM RANGARI

Abdul Rahim Shamsuddin Rangari lived at Thana and went to see Baba in 1913. His wife was suffering from some disease. Her throat and cheek were swollen and she could not eat. Medical help gave no relief. So, he went on the advice of a local pleader to Baba for the cure of his wife. When the journey began, she was unable to eat anything at all. But as they went on to Igatpuri, she was able to take tea and at Nasik something more. Her condition had greatly improved by the time she approached Shirdi. At Shirdi they went into the Mosque and bowed to Baba. Baba asked him, 'Why are you coming? What have you come for?' He said, 'My wife had a swelling in the throat.' Baba said, 'Ask her to come up. Then the lady went up the steps and bowed to Baba.' Baba touched her head and said, '*Khuda Acha karega,*' that is, God will bless. Then Rangari gave Rs. 1-4-0 and Baba accepted it and gave him *udhi*. After staying there for two hours, and finding that her swelling was fast subsiding.

Rangari and his wife left without Baba's permission. But he had to pay penalty for it. The *Tonga* by which he went broke in the middle of the journey at 10 o'clock in the night. There were no conveyances available there. He, his wife and child, could not walk up the many miles that would take them to any village. It was a lonely road and the weather also was very inclement. So, he was repenting going away without Baba's permission, and he did not know what to do. He was wondering what would happen. At midnight, he heard the rumble of a carriage, and a voice crying out, 'Thanawala, Thanawala'. that was the voice of the driver, and the *Tonga* came nearer. Rangari said, 'I am the Thanawala.' The '*tongawala*' said, 'Baba has sent me to you.' Baba knew of the cart breakage, and so he said, 'Baba has sent me to fetch you.' It was 2 a.m. when they reached Shirdi. Baba said, 'You went

LIFE OF SAI BABA

away without permission. So, you have fared in this way.' Rangari begged pardon, and Baba said, 'Wait. in the morning.' Baba after returning from his *bhiksha*, gave some bread and vegetables solid food. Then Baba said, 'You may go.' He looked for a *Tonga*, and could not find any, and came back to Baba. Baba said, 'You go now; see there is a *Tonga*.' He turned and looked, and found a *Tonga*. How suddenly it happened to be there, he could not say.

He found Baba smeared with *Sandal* paste over his face and hands and said, 'This is against Muslim custom.' But Baba said, '*Jaisa Desh, Taisa Vesh,*' which means, 'While in Rome, do as the Romans do.' Baba also said, 'Instead of worshipping their own God, they are worshipping me. Why should I object and displease them? I myself am a devotee of God'. Then Baba spoke to him about music. The night previous to his arrival, there was plenty of music and Baba said that he was completely absorbed. Rangari then said, 'One who loves God would weep, laugh or dance as the songs in praise of God go on.' Baba said, 'Just so, have you got your *Guru*?' Rangari said, 'Yes. Habi Balishah Chisti Nizami is my *Guru*'. Baba said, 'That is why you understand.' That Chishti Guru was always accompanied by music whenever he went out, and music was used as help to trance.

ABDULLA JAN

Abdulla Jan, originally of Tarbella, Mazra district near Peshawar, was a Pathan, living at Korhale, near Sakori, is next Muslim devotee of Baba who had some spiritual and some material touch with Baba. He had left Tarbella when a young boy, as he had none to support him. He simply roamed abroad, and wanted some one to help him to go to Mecca for that is one of the cardinal duties of all Muslims. He walked on and travelled up to Manmad. At Manmad, instead of going to Mumbai, as he originally intended, he heard that Sai Baba was at Shirdi, 30 miles further south and so, as he heard that Baba was showering money on *fakirs*, he hoped that Baba would send him to Mecca. He went to Shirdi in 1913. When he entered the gate of the *Masjid*, Baba was in the main building. Their eyes met. At once, he had the feeling that Baba was his *Guru*. So, he stayed on at Shirdi, as Baba was feeding every *fakir* abundantly and instead of going to Mecca. Abdulla Jan wanted to live an easy life at Shirdi. He was aged only 17. He had no serious views about life. But as he stayed at Shirdi, there were noticeable changes in his mentality, which illustrate Baba's way of promoting Hindu-Muslim Unity. When he first came to Shirdi, he like other Pathans, regarded Hindus as enemies and proper prey. After staying 3 years with Baba, this hatred passed away, and he began to view Hindus as his brethren. He gradually absorbed the national feeling and regretted very much that at Mumbai, Hindus and Muslims were fighting with each other destroying Mosques and temples, and he thought that if they wiped each other out the foreigners only would have the whole country to themselves.

When Baba passed away in 1918, he was 22. Even then he was not sufficiently serious to have any development on the religious side. He felt however grieved at Baba's disappearance and started off on his

LIFE OF SAI BABA

travels again. In 1926, he was going back North. Then in the Swat valley (Malekand Agency) he found the tomb of a great saint, Akun Baba, who was a Sayyad, a direct descendant of Mohamed. His miraculous powers were the subject of popular legends. That Akun Baba is said to have locked up Lord Roberts on a hill for three months and 11 days. During Abdulla Jan's stay there, one night he had a dream in which a saint appeared. 'Who was it?' It was not Akun Baba that he had prayed to, but Sai Baba who was seated on a chair near his head. When he woke, he remembered the dream. So, he found he was still under Baba's care, though it was eight years since Baba passed away. As Sai was kind enough of his own accord to give him *Sakshatkar*, 1500 miles away from Shirdi, his reverence for Sai increased and his former idea that Sai Baba had deceived him by giving him no help during the five years of his stay, was found to be wrong. At This discovery he returned to India with full faith in Sai Baba.

In 1924 he married. He is now living at Korhale, four miles from Shirdi. He is lucky enough to have Baba's appearance before him once in two or four years and he moralises on the past and sees the vanity of human wishes. Baba was surrounded by crowds in his lifetime, and it was hard to find room in the Mosque on account of these crowds of men swarming around him, and a large number of dogs intermingled in the crowd. In 1936, when he was giving this statement to B. V. Narasimha Swamiji there was very few people to be seen. In 1936, he said that the Mosque, as a rule was deserted. He said, "If Baba's splendour was so short lived, then what about a gnat like me?"

R. A. Tarkhad called Baba Saheb Tarkhad, told B. V. Narasimha Swamiji of the following incident. One night when Baba Saheb Tarkhad and others were sleeping at the chavadi on one side of Baba, Mir Jaman of Kandahar who was then with Baba as a recent arrival was sleeping on the other side and suddenly got up at 3 a.m. and told Baba, "Hindus are spoiling you and the Islamic faith. Permit me, I will cut throats of all these and effect your release." Baba Saheb Tarkhad listened to those words with fear, and wondered if the wretch really meant to murder him in cold blood. Baba, however placated Mir Jaman by saying that he, Baba, was *pagal* and the Hindus worshipping him there were mad and that he was responsible for their worshipping him. Contrary not only to the tenets of Islam, but contrary to their own Hindu customs, the Hindus worshipped him. Baba said they were not responsible for his madness, but he was responsible for theirs. So, if anybody's throat is to be cut, Baba said, "my throat is to be cut". Saying this, Baba offered his throat. Then Mir Jaman kept quiet.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

There was another intolerant Muslim, named Abdulla Khan of Nagpur, who stayed for three or four months with Baba. He was a journalist and familiar with Buty and Mahatma Gandhi. He was a Hindustani Pathan and not really a Rohilla. He died at Ahmednagar. During his stay at Shirdi he occasionally complained that Baba had deceived him. Once this man beat Nana Chopdar and was charged before the Kopergaon Magistrate. He was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of Rs. 15. As he had no security to offer and so was in jail for a while. Buty sent him Rs. 15, but he declined to receive it saying, "He that had deceived me should pay the Rs. 15 and no other." So, Baba sent the Rs. 15 out of his own pocket and got him released.

When Baba was in the flesh, Abdulla Jan once expressed his fear that Baba would expire and all his work and influence would pass away with him. Baba said, "*Turban Hun Danda Hani*, which is the Marathi expression for, "From within the tomb I will beat with sticks." This meant the death of his body would not terminate his influence or activity.

It is better to note here whether Baba observed the five essential tenets of Islam so as to impress the Muslims. The five tenets are uttering the *Kalami* or declaration of faith, namely, There is no god but God and Mohamed is the Prophet; *Panch Namaz*, saying the *Namaz* five times a day, at dawn, at 10 a.m., at 12 noon, at 5 p.m. and at night, kneeling and bending the body at each utterance, fasting, especially all the forty days of *Ramzan*, and on other occasions about 8 or 10 times in the year; alms-giving; Haj, that is, going to Mecca. Whoever has funds, must go to Mecca. Others, if they can get the funds, must go to Mecca. These are the five tenets of Islam. Of these, Baba observed only alms-giving, that is, when he got funds after 1908 and up to 1918. His alms-giving was a princely scale and he supported over two hundred homeless beggars at Shirdi and distributed not merely vegetarian food, but also meat for non-vegetarians specially prepared as *samaradhana* from his Hundi, by himself. He also distributed clothes to the poor periodically. In addition to regular donations to certain persons, he also gave liberally to dancers, athletes, acrobats and *Ramadasis*, and all sorts of people that came to him for alms. His reputation as a liberal Maharaj was known very far from Shirdi and attracted people like Madras *Ramadasis* and this man Tarbella Abdulla Jan.

As for going to Mecca, Baba never cared to go to Mecca and had no need to go to Mecca. As for the principles of Islam, and how far Baba

LIFE OF SAI BABA

observed them or accepted them, the question is very difficult to answer. Amongst Muslims themselves, there are various sects, and some of them like Quadians, following Mirza Ahmed who claims to be the resurrected Messiah or Mohamed held views resembling Hinduism in many particulars. *Sunnis* and *Shias* agree on certain particulars and differ in others. It is very difficult to take up doctrines of each set, and see how much of it is in accordance with Baba's views, especially those, which may be found in the Gospel of Sai Baba or his sayings. Taking the Qadian, that is Mirza Ahmed's book, we find that practically the major portion of his tenets expresses only what Baba was acting upon and declaring all his life. This Qadian book was published after Baba left the flesh. Mirza Ahmed says that one must believe in the true and living god, and the proof of the truth and life of God lies in the fact that God is All powerful and responds to prayers. Surely, these were Baba's doctrines and he in fact was and is himself responding to prayer and is possessed of vast divine powers. Whether the Quadians would treat Baba as an Angel of the highest degree or in any other way, cannot be known, as no Qadian has expressed his view about Baba. But Baba himself has stated, "God has agents everywhere" and agents would include angels. "They have vast powers. I have vast powers." These appear to be in full consonance with Islam, and they are Baba's doctrines. The Qadian description of God nowhere differs from the ideas of God expressed by Baba. So, Baba has taken up for his basis, ideas of God common to many, if not all Muslims and Hindus. The differences in doctrine or practise between sect and sect are matters of no importance. The essence of religion, however, is in the height reached by the truly pious man; and the truly pious Hindu and the truly pious Muslim, reach heights of love to God by surrender to God, and such persons are recognised as perfect followers of their respective religions, as judged by dicta of all religions. Baba himself was perfect. By reaching God, enjoying the bliss of God and thoroughly surrendering his will to God. Baba had placed himself in a position that could be appreciated by all great religions. Hindu or Muslim or other. Therefore, the question as to how far Muslim can or will appreciate Baba in the near future, is capable of a very hopeful solution. So long as the anti-Indian and the partition of India movement was afoot, bitterness between Hindus and Muslims was sedulously developed as part of the political platform. But as matters stand at present, things appear to be settling down, and in any case, hatred cannot remain long as the plank on which any State Government policy could be built. The anti-Hindu feeling of Muslims is steadily dwindling down and as the years pass, we may be sure that more and more people of other sects will be drawn to Sai Baba who at present is mostly a Hindu possession, in the sense that it is the Hindus

LIFE OF SAI BABA

who are managing the Sai Sansthan without a single Muslim amongst the trustees or on the committee of management. The books and journals dealing with Baba are all in the hands of Hindus and as for the followers of Baba, the Hindus outnumber the Muslims out of all proportion to the strength of their population. In the Indian Union, the Muslims are about 15% of the population. Amongst the followers of Baba, however they are perhaps less than 5%. The rapidity with which the Sai faith is spreading amongst the Hindus is phenomenal. Year after year, lakhs are drawn to Baba, and, if anyone visits Shirdi now, he would note how the whole place and the Dwarakamayee are crowded daily, much more now than they were crowded even in Baba's time. They are mostly Hindus. But even amongst other groups, those who are a bit cultured, are contributing their quota to the number of Sai bhaktas, and to the literature on the subject of the Sai Faith. The Parsis are a very cultured portion of the Indian Community and though small in number, they are prominent among Sai *bhaktas* and even in contributing literature. A Parsi lady has written a fine booklet in which Baba is treated as the *Guru-God*, the All-in-All of the writer.

As far the other communities, Christians form according to the census of a very small minority and amongst Sai devotees, they form still a smaller minority. But still there are Christians who have benefitted from Sai's light and Sai's Grace. They are visiting the Sai Shrine and regarding him as their guardian angel and Saviour. Naturally the Roman Catholics being more like Hindus, are drawn more easily to Baba and in greater numbers than the Protestants. But so far as doctrine or dogma is concerned, Baba's catholicity, Baba's wide liberality and freedom from any rigid doctrines, make it quite as easy for the Protestant as for the Catholic to resort to him and derive benefits from him. The only thing needed is the requisite degree of faith.

ADAM DALAI

Adam Dalali, an estate broker at Bandra, went to Baba for purely earthly benefits. He had several sons. Everytime one of these had to be married, Dalali found himself short of funds. According to Muslim custom, the father of the boy has to provide the funds. So, he went to Baba. Baba blessed him and said, "Go now, you can perform the marriage." When he returned, he got an excellent brokerage giving him money for the marriage. So, like that, on the occasion of each son's marriage, Baba's blessings gave him the necessary funds. Once he was charged in a criminal case with having acted as a broker in the sale of a mortgaged building. A title deed then given was said to be a forgery. The police first included Dalali amongst the accused. Then, at the instance of Tendulkar, he prayed to Baba and Tendulkar and Mrs. Tendulkar also prayed to Baba. Then Dalali was discharged.

All his experiences, he said, were earthly matters. He never read the Koran nor asked for spiritual advice. Baba occasionally came to him in other forms and tested him. Once Baba came as a *marwadi* and said that he was hungry. Then Dalali gave him four annas and asked him to go to a marwadi's hotel. When later he went to Baba, Baba said to the persons present, "I went to this man. He sent me to a *marwadi's* hotel". This man is also liberal-minded enough to have Baba's picture at his house and burn scented sticks before it. Extremely orthodox Muslims will not worship or tolerate even portraits.

B. V. DEV

LIFE OF SAI BABA

B. V. Dev was at the close of his life a trustee of the Shirdi Sai Sansthan. He went to see Sri Sai Baba for the first time in about 1910 being drawn through Chandorkar. Chandorkar was the Deputy Collector under whom he was the *Mamlatdar*. His brother wrote to him that Chandorkar had faith in Sai Baba and consequently Dev might try to derive information and contact through the Deputy Collector. When Chandorkar gave him some of his experiences and advised him to go to see Sri Sai Baba, Dev wondered whether he should not also like Chandorkar wait for a call from Sri Sai Baba. That implied some degree of egotism that if a Deputy Collector was worth a call, he, as *Mamlatdar*, also was worth a call. But later he gave up that absurd attitude, for it was not the official position of Nana Chandorkar that merited the call. It was the previous contact of four *janmas* with Baba and the great work of an apostle that he was to be entrusted with, that made Baba send for him. Similar reasons could not apply to B.V. Dev. Anyhow being pressed by Chandorkar and finding that a visit to Baba would be productive only of good, he made up his mind to go. His first impression of Baba was fairly good. He had his own ways of viewing spiritual matters and he was a good student of sacred literature especially in Marathi. He was studying Eknath's and *Jnaneswar's* books, making fairly good progress in spirituality, as ordinarily understood. But there was something very peculiar in his case. *Jnaneswari* is used as *pothi*, a daily *parayana* book by most people and they succeeded in effecting one complete *parayanam* within a specified period, the reading going on from day to day. In Sri. B. V. Dev's case, however, on the first occasion, on the second and also on the third, whenever he began the *parayana* of *Jnaneswari*, obstacles of various sorts sprang up, and he could not finish the reading in a continuous fashion. He was very puzzled and also disgusted. There must be some unseen reason behind the obstacle. What it could be, he could not guess. This was one of the things, which brought him nearer to Baba. When he went to Shirdi with *Jnaneswari*, he was anxious to get Baba's aid for overcoming the unseen obstacle. He gave Baba the *Jnaneswari* with one rupee so that the book might be returned to him for study.

Baba: Why one rupee? Bring Rs. 20.

Dev brought and gave Rs. 20, but still Baba said nothing about *Pothi*. That night Dev was trying to talk to Balakram Manker, who derived much spiritual benefit from Baba and asked him to narrate his experience with Baba, showing how he got into His Grace. Balakram Manker put off the narration till the next evening. Next day Baba asked Dev, "Give me Rs. 20." Dev paid it and went back and was

LIFE OF SAI BABA

talking to Balakram. Balakram was just beginning his narration. Just then Baba sent for Dev and Dev went.

Baba: What are you talking? With whom and where?

B. V. Dev: At Dixit wada I was talking with Balakram about your greatness and fame.

Baba: Fetch Rs. 25.

Dev fetched and paid Rs. 25 to Baba.

Baba: Sit here in Mosque.

Baba then suddenly grew angry and said, "Why are you stealing my rag? Is it your way to steal and that despite your grey hairs? I will kill you with a hatchet". Baba's asking dakshina and his sudden anger might ordinarily be supposed to act as shock to his mind, but in whatever way they were intended to operate, Baba did not make it clear at once. Dev was benefitted and did not know what the rag was and what the anger would lead to. After ten minutes of such fiery anger, Dev was sent back. Half an hour later, Baba sent for Dev and all the others came to the *Masjid*. Then Baba addressing Dev, said, "*Tambye Bhav*, have I wounded you by talking of the rag? If there is theft, it has to be mentioned. There is no other go. Be it so. God will look to everything." Then he asked Dev for Rs. 12 dakshina, which Dev procured and paid.

Baba to Dev: What are you doing?

Dev: Nothing.

Baba: Go on reading *Pothi* daily in the morning at the *wada*. When I wished to give you a nice lace shawl in its entirety why do you go and steal a tatter?

Dev then began reading *Jnaneswari* as *Pothi* and thereafter there were no more obstacles. This was a sure proof to him of Baba's controlling powers and there was no necessity for him thereafter to enquire about the experience of others. Dev realised that such personal experiences formed a full lace shawl given by Baba and picking up secondhand information from others of their experiences of Baba amounted to stealing rags of Baba.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Though Dev succeeded in reading *Jnaneswari* without obstacle, he had made no progress in understanding its meaning. Baba then appeared in his dream and asked. "Do you understand the meaning of what you read?"

Dev with tears: "No. How can I understand unless you grant it by your grace?"

Baba: "You are reading too hastily. Sit by my side and read."

Dev: "What shall I read?"

Baba: "*Adhyatma*."

Dev went in and brought *Adhyatma Ramayana*. Then dream ended and Dev woke up.

When Dev found that his completion of *Jnaneswari* was evidently a *chamatkar* of Baba, by which he overcome the unseen obstacles to the completion of his *parayana* of *Jnaneswari*, he understood that this *chamatkar* of Baba was a full lace shawl while the stories about Baba's lilas which he would glean from Mankar would be second hand stories of other people's experiences. Baba occasionally gave him hints for his spiritual progress. But it was not always that Dev could understand them correctly. Baba asked Dev once, "*Bhav*, give me *dakshina*" B.V. Dev gave one guinea.

Baba: Give more.

Baba, after getting four guinea said, "Though four were given by you, Baba has got only one."

Dev: "Baba I have given four."

Baba: "Yes, but I have only one. You will know."

The obvious interpretation is, though the devotee surrenders his fourfold *Antahkarana Manas, Buddhi, ahamkara* and *Chitta*, Baba receives only the *Jiva* and all multiplicity when it reached God – Baba, becomes one. So, the mind must surrender multiplicity unto the *Guru* God to attain unity.

Baba helped B.V.Dev to surrender himself more and more and derive Baba's help at every stage and hence, B.V.Dev in his turn become a

LIFE OF SAI BABA

means of spreading Baba's glory. Though not quite on the large scale in which Chandorkar did work for Baba. Dev also absorbed Baba's magnetism through Chandorkar and also directly, and communicated Baba's magnetism to others. But it is not always easy to make people derive full faith in Baba. A *karnam* under B.V.Dev, having learnt about Dev's attachment to a great *Satpurusha* called Sai Baba, came to him to get Baba's help to decide an important question for himself and his family. That *karnam* had his own Guru who for his own purposes wished to get a new image to replace the *karnam's* former image and have a grand installation ceremony, hoping to derive considerable pecuniary profits from the proposed ceremony. So, while the priest of the *karnam* insisted on it, the *karnam* himself had some doubts and came to Dev and through him consulted Baba as to whether the new image should be brought and installed. Baba was consulted, and gave his opinion that the new image should not be brought in. The consultation was through Shama. The *karnam*, being very anxious to get his priest's advice confirmed, wanted to ask Baba, "What would happen if the new image was brought?" Baba gave a story. He said he and a companion had gone together and he told his companion not to buy an animal. In spite of his advice, that animal was bought and brought to the village, and at once an epidemic of plague broke out as the result of the animal coming in. Baba left it there. The *karnam*, not fully impressed by Baba's All-knowing character, tried to please his *Guru* and brought in the new image. At once an epidemic broke out and the *karnam's* own wife was attacked first. The *karnam* asked his *Guru* to help him, but that *Guru* wanted half the property of the *karnam* to be made over immediately to the priest, and was trying in various ways to deprive the *karnam* of his property. The *karnam* woke up. He went to Dev and mentioned how things had turned out. Then on Dev's advice he removed the new idol and reinstalled the old idol. By Baba's grace he was saved from further harm.

Dev's services for Baba were mainly through Sai *Sansthan* and through his researches into matters connected with Sai Baba and the *Sansthan*. These researches he made after great trouble. For instance, he made researches into the ancient history of Shirdi and into the meaning of certain words and phrases. These articles appeared in the Sai Lila Masik which was the organ of the Shirdi Sai *Sansthan*, of which he was a member, and signed them with the pseudonym, *Babache bal* that is, child of Baba. He had a very good command of Marathi and even in Sanskrit his proficiency enabled him to compose brilliant verses which have appeared from time to time in Sai Lila Masik. He took very active interest in promoting the welfare of the *Sansthan*, and spent a very large part of his time at Shirdi. He had a good physique

LIFE OF SAI BABA

and could endure thirst, hunger or troubles for long periods. He had assisted various enquiries into matters on Sai and enabled them to become staunch Sai *bhaktas*. In the statement he has given to the author, some hints may be found of the way in which he helped the Sai *Sansthan*. He worked to the last as a trustee of the *Sansthan*, and he passed away dying in harness so to speak. He has written a good deal in Marathi and these would be appreciated by those who know that language. The accuracy of some interpretations he has given to Baba's Sayings has appeared, however, to the author to be doubtful but one cannot be positive in these cases. Taking first the conclusion in Baba's Charters and Sayings in paragraph 245 mentioned earlier, the interpretation given to Baba's statement is the author's and not Mr. Dev's for Mr. Dev thought that he should keep Baba's teachings secret and did not reveal how he interpreted Baba's statement that he gave four. Baba received only one. Dev's services have now been continued by his son Sri. S.B. Dev, who is now also a trustee of the *Sansthan*, doing yeoman service for Baba.

P. R. AVASTE

Sri Purushotham R. Avaste, B.A., LL.B., Poona a retired judge of Gwalior, is another devotee of Sai Baba whose great merit is the fact that but for him, Sri B.V.N. Swami, who was made the instrument of spreading Baba's faith throughout India, would not have known about Baba, at any rate not enough to make him do that work as he has done. Sri Avaste was born in February 1870 in a fairly orthodox family and had very good and holy associations and contacts for nearly two decades. In his sixth year, he came in contact with Dev Mamlatdar, as he was known, that is, Sri Yeshwant Rao Basker, *Mamlatdar* of Satara and when that officer was transferred to Nasik, Sri Avaste's father was also in Nasik. Young Purushotham had the opportunity of taking his *darsan* and receiving one guava fruit as prasad at his hands. Thereafter the young Avaste had many opportunities of taking his *darsan* and learning about his wonderful piety-piety that is said to have wrought miracles like that of Ramadas of Bhadrachalam. This Dev *Mamlatdar*, being very charitable, helped a poor man to perform his son's marriage and gave the funds out of treasury of which he was in charge, hoping to replace it in due course when he got the funds. This leaked out and somebody carried the report, and the Collector of the District paid a surprise visit and looked up the treasury and later tried to check the accounts with the cash balance. Dev *Mamlatdar* who

LIFE OF SAI BABA

did not know anything of it, was quietly carrying on his usual work at home including puja, learnt after all his puja and other things were over that the Collector looked up the accounts and checked the cash balance with it, and found that the two tallied. Dev then thanked his *Ishtamurti* for making up the deficit. When Dev *Mamlatdar* retired, he was leading a very pious life, influencing the minds of old and young. Avaste was very impressed with him, especially between 1887-90, that is, between the ages of 17 and 20, when Dev *Mamlatdar* was at Nasik leading the life of a religious recluse. Avaste and his father often visited him and derived considerable religious influence. This was a very important grounding. Soon after, in his college course, Avaste went on with his studies of John Stuart Mill and Spencer, and the prevailing scepticism and theism of the West easily captured his mind, and he became materialistic, combative and egoistic. He wished to distinguish himself as a debater and a speaker, and wanted to earn lots of money. The old influence appeared to have left him. Luckily however in 1889, when he was just 19, he got, in a street *bazaar*, a copy of the Bhagavad Gita for half an *anna*, and he carefully preserved it in his pocket, and it had become a habit with him to read the Gita everyday during his leisure hours. This stood him in very good stead in later life. This atheistic period lasted for eight years, namely, from 1890 to 1898 when he was in the full flush of youth. As Providence would have it, even in that period his atheism received some shocks, which were noteworthy. He picked up a stray leaf from the Srimad Bhagavata and read it. That contained stanza wherein fear is described as arising out of a sense of duality resulting from one going astray from God and getting caught up by *Maya*, which veils one's view of God, and prevents one from uniting with God. Another such opportune interference with his atheism was when he went to listen to the devotional songs of a very charming South Indian lady singing in Tamil or Telugu before the figure of Sri Ram, making gestures and referring to Mira Bai, Mukta Bai, Jnana Bai and others. Sri Avaste was always very sensitive and impressionable and this lady's songs brought home to his mind the beauty and advantage of *Bhakti*. A third such interference was when he indulged in hot discussions with his cousins about the existence of God, in which they appointed their maternal uncle Sri Bala Bima Thakurdas as the judge. The discussion went on endlessly and the umpire was not consulted, each hoping to beat down the other and convincing him about the correctness of his position. Anyhow Sri Avaste met the umpire, who had a great belief in *Kirtan* and *puranas*, and asked him whether he truly and honestly believed that the saints were as great as they were represented to be and whether he could convince him of it. Then that uncle Sri Avaste took him before the Sri Ram image inside the temple, and swore solemnly

LIFE OF SAI BABA

an oath before him that he fully believed every word stated in these holy books, and hoped that it would be P.R. Avaste's lot to meet such a saint, he would get into the same certainly. Then Sri Avaste asked him to mention the name of some saints who were living. That uncle gave him the names of Dondi Bua of Palus, Hari Maharaj of Phaltan and Sri Kumbharaswami of Kolhapur. The uncle took a promise from Avaste to visit them and that he should test them and get convinced. Luckily, Sri Avaste was able to meet all the above three.

Sri Avaste had attended philosophical lectures of Dr. Besant and Dr. Richardson, and read books on philosophy and religion. Poona was suffering from an outbreak of plague at the end of 1896, and the anxiety for life and property on that account drove him to religion and God. He began reading reverentially the lives of Maruthi saints namely Jnaneswar, Eknath, Namdev, Tukaram, and Ramdas, as a refuge from plague. He went to Targaon to his uncle's house where sacred books on Krishna were all available and read them daily. Enquiring about Dondi Bua of Palus from his uncle, he was told how to get to Palus. He went to Palus and got Dondi Bua's *darsan*. He was reading Bhagavad Gita on the way, and stopped suddenly at the IV Chapter, 34th Stanza, where saints are said to give jnana. He resolved to test this with that Dondi Bua and whether he would give jnana to him. In the beginning, Bua treated him curtly, asked him to go and salute the temple, because when he looked at the Bua seated outside and guessed that he was evidently a *Sudra*, he did not find it easy to bow to him being a *Brahmin*. When he said, "Go to the temple", he felt it easy and he went inside and discovered that it was the picture of the same Sudra Bua inside that was worshipped. Anyhow, he had flowers and offerings in hand and placed them there. He discovered that the Sudra outside was the God worshipped inside. There was no image there but only his picture. After a couple of hours spent there struggling against his own doubts; he came out and apologized to the Dondi Bua, and asked him how he came by his powers. He replied, "It is very easy. Simply say, *Ram, Ram, Rajaram Seetharam* and everything is accomplished" Then Dondi Bua asked Avaste to cook for him and his company. Dondi Bua provided the salt, as he did not wish to eat anybody else's salt and be obliged to him. He mixed his salt with the food and Avaste prepared. On the whole Avaste was not willing to treat Dondi Bua as his *Guru*, and Dondi Bua also said that he did not want to be anybody's *Guru*. Anyhow, he gave him his blessing and Avaste came back.

The next person he met was a Brahmin Paramahansa. Avaste approached him with the mental question. "Can *Brahma Jnana* be got?" That person made Avaste lie down and he also lay down on the

ground by his side and told him, "Have no fear". But when that person put his hand across the throat of Avaste and nearly choked him, Avaste got frightened and tried to evade the grip. That man said, "You are a coward. Get away. You cannot realise *Brahman*".

Sri Avaste next went to Domi Bua of Satara. After that he came to meet an elderly lady who was on a sojourn at a *dharmasala* at Poona in the Somvar temple which was said to be free from plague. He went along with a friend, who was the devotee of a yogi, to visit that lady. Avaste took Vivekananda's Raja Yoga, in respect of which he wanted to put question as to *Kundalini*, how it progressed through various *chakras*, etcetra. They found her surrounded by a motley crowd of devotees, *pandits*, sceptics and scoffers. They thought that there was very little chance of talking to her. So they sat at a distance and resolved that at a fixed time, say, 5 o'clock they should go away if they got no chance of talking to her. Just five minutes before that hour, the lady got rid of the crowd by a very clever device. She suddenly covered her face and said that she was dying, and asked all the people to go away. The crowd dispersed. Naturally Sri Avaste and his friend thought that they too should go away, but first went near her to bow to her. As they said that they should not trouble her, as she was not in good health, she said that she was feigning ill-health for their sake, and she gave evidence of her powers. The picture of the *Kundalini* and chakras was shown to her, and she was asked whether she could enlighten them on the subject. She returned the book and said her Guru Maharaj had shown her only the path of *bhakti*, and she could therefore, give no help on Yoga. Then, they left her, well impressed with her simple and unassuming manners. So, Avaste went again to listen to her talks, which was after dusk, sitting in a dark corner outside the assembled crowd. He used to carry some questions in his head for solution in respect of matters he had studied during the day. During the talk he would change her topic, and raise the very question, which he had in his mind. She would then put those questions before elderly people and the *pandits* near her, who would join the discussion. After sifting and rejecting their answers, she would give the solution, which satisfied Avaste. She stated that the same question was once raised and answered by her *Sadguru*. Knowing her powers, Avaste induced his friends to go with him to pay their respects to the lady. They continued to attend her talks and became more intimate. He had very high regard for her divine powers. One day she sends for him at his friend's house, and he came along with his friend, his younger brother, and both their wives. She said she was going to leave the place shortly and wanted to give some *mantra* and instruction under instruction from her Guru Maharaj, if Avaste and others were willing to accept it.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

But Avaste had no desire to have a *Guru*, and would not accept mantra except under conditions. At last, she made him accept some *mantras*. The mantras were *Sivapanchakshari*. She gave Panchakshari to each one, prefixing in the cast of the males *Hari Om* and omitting it when giving it to the ladies. To Avaste, she said she had come to Poona especially to meet him, and there would be no harm in his accepting her advice. He imposed a condition that he would not use any *japa mala* or keep any reckoning *sankhya* of the number of *japas*, not would he observe any formality about the time and place of the Japa, but will only mentally repeat it, whenever his mind was not otherwise engaged. She agreed, and then gave him *Panchakshari* and also said that she was not going to be Avaste's *Guru*, because she thought Avaste was her *Guru*, and thus flattered him. In the japa, she made slight changes for each, giving precedence to one after another of the letters of the *Panchaksahari* as representing the five elements with five presiding deities. Then she left Poona. She was a widow with a two or three year old child, and she went to see her son. But she wanted to be *sanyasi* following the lines of Tulsidas whose Ramayana she had always been reading since childhood. Hanuman was pleased to give her his *darsan*, and thence forward she went from place to place visiting holy places and holding *saptahas*, feeding the *Brahmins* and poor by the hundreds. It took her three years thus to march from Hardwar to Coimbatore. At Coimbatore in South India she sat up at a Hanuman temple and began her routine. People were attracted to her. Her Guru was at Velankurichi in the Coimbatore district. He was a coffee planter living with his family and he was a devotee of Sri Ram for whom he had built a small temple near his quarters. She stayed in his village for six months and then started off for her home at Saraitareisn in Uttar Pradesh. She came to Poona directly from Pandharpur, and told Avaste at a private interview, that she had been specially commissioned by her *Sadguru* to come to Poona for his sake. She received messages from her *Sadguru* during her japa and meditation, after daily *pooja* of Hanuman and her Guru. His advice to Avaste was to concentrate his mind on the first three letters of the *japa*, then on the *pranava* alone and finally on the inflow and outflow of the breath, *pranayama*. He was told not to be anxious to have darsan of the presiding deities of those letters but to carry out her instructions as well as he could.

A very young girl Shanti, whom he was fond of once, was away and when he was searching for her, she cried out from a distance, "What are you searching for?" He answered "Shanti". She replied, "Shanti is not got by this sort of search by waiting quietly; then it comes automatically." One day she came to the group in which her father,

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Avaste and others were talking about *sakshatkara* and God and asked whether any one of them had seen God. She asked Avaste point blank, "Have you had *Sakshatkar*." and he said, "No". One day while reading Tukaram, he came across an *abhanga* in which Tukaram insists on giving his *diksha* then and there and Avaste was started and sat quiet. He felt as if God was asking him from outside the window next to him whether He should come in. Avaste felt that he was not yet fit for *darsan*, and said, "No, no." Then he stopped the reading, as he felt himself incapable of bearing the strain of seeing God and he promised not to trouble God again. Then Shanti asked him to pray to *Sri Ram* to grant him *Sakshatkar* and he promised each night to pray. She also would pray for *Sakshatkar* each night before going to bed. One night, he felt that *Sri Rama* was slowly descending from the top of the door of the hall where the image of the deity he worshipped had been placed. He bowed down, and the vision passed away before he could see the part above the breast. He had seen only the legs and the waist. He discontinued this practice of night prayer as he did not wish to repeat the experience and he stuck to that idea ever since.

His initiation into the *Panchakshari* was in 1898, and his *darsan* of *Rama* was in 1912. In 1914, he wanted to go to Pandharpur, and prayed to Pandharinath for the fulfillment of the word of his lady *Guru*. Then M. B. Rege, a devotee of Sai Baba, came to him and learning about his intention to go to Pandharpur, told him to stop at Shirdi, which was on the way from Indore to Pandharpur. Avaste promised to go with Rege to Shirdi. So, during Christmas of 1914, they started. It was then that they had the threatened interruption of the rail journey at Mhow as already described. Eventually the Commander who first commandeered the train allowed Avaste and Rege to continue their journey and when they reached Shirdi, They went to stay with Ramakrishna Ayi, and she appeared to him as a *Sadguru*. She recalled some peculiar incidents that had taken place years ago in the company of his lady *Guru*, and therefore struck him as a remarkable person. He agreed to treat her as a sister of his lady *Guru* but not as a substitute for her. "Even if I die will you not agree?" asked Ayi. He said, "No." Suddenly Ayi cried out that she was dead; and lay flat on the ground as if she was really dead. "This was exactly like his first *Guru's* conduct on the first occasion when he had met her. He got upset and ran up to her and put her head on his lap and shed tears. Then in order to revive her, he began to loudly recite the *Panchakshari mantras*, which his *Guru* had taught him, though his first *Guru* had said that he should not loudly recite those mantras. He implored each of those gods presiding over each of the *Panchakshari* letters to revive this lady. He offered to give up all his *punya* of 16 years of *japa* of the *mantra* if she revived.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Then she gradually opened her eyes, as if she had come out of her swoon. She said to him, "You go and mind your business." He felt grateful for having repaired the consequences of his folly. He felt sorry for violating his *Guru's* instruction not to pronounce the *mantras* loudly. Then his mind was so upset that he began to repeat the *mantras* again. He began to see one deity after another coming down as in a magic lantern show. After the first two or three deities appeared, Ayi told him, "Stop all this show. Lie down. Go to sleep." He obeyed Ayi. During the succeeding days also, he had similar experiences. On the final day, an *Ekadasi* day, he got into a repentant mood for having to go Shirdi contrary to the advice of his *Guru*. He had been told not to visit saints, as they would molest him. Then he feared that his stay at Shirdi would endanger him and his *mantras* would all lose their efficacy. In this mood, he was slowly beginning to feel that he and even Ramakrishna Ayi were led to astray by Sai, a juggler, an old *fakir*, who imposed upon the public and upon so many honest and devout people including Ayi, inducing them to believe him to be a saint and an incarnation of God. Suddenly he felt that Sai was trying to overpower him by his sorcery and felt he must protect himself and overcome him. So, he began uttering loudly and vehemently *Sri Ram, Sri Ram*, and carried on that *nama japa* for a long time. Ayi and Rege went up to Sai to free Avaste from this fit of craziness, having passed the whole night in this way. He was cured of this spell instantly when he heard in the morning Baba uttering the words, in a solemn and melodious way, "*Allah Malik hai* from the *chavadi*, which is fairly near the *sala* where Avaste was staying. He then mentally apologised to Baba for his thought and behaviour. As soon as the morning prayers and *arati* were finished, Baba sent for Rege and told him to take Avaste away from Shirdi. A *Tonga* was soon got ready and he and Rege started off. They saluted Baba near the village gate and got his blessings for leaving. Every male bird or beast on the way appeared to Avaste as Baba and female birds and beasts as Ayi. That was so till they reached the *Lendi* rivulet. After that, this spell left him. He lay quietly on his friends lap and slept. He reached home safe.

One result of his visit to Shirdi was that his desire to go to Pandharpur vanished. Baba had shown himself as Vittal. Thereafter Avaste repeated his visits to Shirdi along with his family or friends, twice or thrice each year, until Baba's *Mahasamadhi* in 1918.

CHAKRA NARAIN

The persons that swarmed to Baba's feet generally were persons of the Hindu religion and to a small extent of other religions also. The Hindus, as a whole, are more liberal in their outlook and do not hesitate to approach a *Guru*; to whatever community he may belong, or go to any place of worship and worship any object. The Mohammadans, as a rule, are too conservative to approach a saint shows himself saturated with Hindu ideas and who allows the worship of idols and the worship of himself, especially in a Mosque to the accompaniment of the noise and din characteristic of Hindu worship. The Protestant Christians have similar views and neither of these two classes will go near a place where an idol of a man is placed and worshipped. This explains why the Mohammadan followers of Baba were a very small minority. We do not know of a single Protestant Christian who approached Baba with the spirit of devotion to him.

Chakra Narain was perhaps the only one and one of the few Protestant Christians who had some appreciation of Baba. In his statement in the book, *Devotees Experiences*, Vol. 1, in October 1936, he showed some appreciation of Sai Baba. He admitted that he was not a believer in Baba, but he began to admire his noble qualities, which he came to know when he was ordered to watch Baba. He and some of his men were watching Baba for various purposes including income tax. He conceived a great regard for Baba because he found that Baba was not moved by *kamini* or *kanchana*, woman and wealth. Many women would come to Baba and place their bare heads on his bare feet and sit close to him. But Baba was totally unmoved. He would not care to cast one glance of admiration or love or lust at any face. Baba was clearly an unmistakably unattached *virakta*. This *Fouzdar* was asked to watch Baba regarding the money he received from people. He also had great admiration for Baba. People voluntarily gave money to Baba. If anybody did not give him money, Baba would not hate him or displease or curse him. The same thing about his begging for bread. Baba did not care what it was that was put into his sling or into his tin. The sling carried the solids and the tin carried the liquids, which were given to him. No doubt they all got mixed up and became *Olla Podrida*. Whatever he got, whether food or money, he scattered it with a liberal hand. Food was distributed to innumerable beggars and the money was given away as soon as he got it. When he died, the Government took possession of his cash, and the amount with him was only Rs.16.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Yet daily he gave away hundreds of rupees and Chakra Narain was thunderstruck at the fact that his riches, which they noticed were limited, and that thought there was no stock of cash with him at the beginning of the day, at the end of the day he had paid hundreds of rupees. Wherefrom did the excess come for him to disburse or pay? The Police could not make out. Therefore Chakra Narain concluded that Baba had divine powers. Again he noticed with great admiration Baba's behaviour towards other religions. When Chakra Narain, a Christian, was appointed as Sub-Inspector at Rahata, some of his followers, who were displeased, went and told Baba, "The new *Fouzdar* is neither a Hindu nor a Mohammadan but a Christian." Baba's retort was, "What of that? He is my brother". It must be remembered that Baba was called a *Maharaja* and looked exactly like a *Maharaja* in the midst of all regal paraphernalia. His powers also struck Chakra Narain as marvelous, that is, his powers of clairvoyance and clairaudience, in popular parlance, but known to scholars as *Antarjnana* or *Ritambhara prajna* or *Pratiba*. He cites one instance. A police officer went and bowed to Baba. Baba asked for *dakshina*. The officer said that he had nothing. Baba said, "See your purse. A fifty-rupee note is in it." Then the note was produced and offered to Baba. Baba took only a small amount of it and returned the rest to him and asked him to keep the balance as he would soon be in trouble and would need it. That is what exactly happened. Soon after his visit, the officer got into trouble and had to use the balance to extricate himself. After thus escaping from trouble that officer in his gratitude sent the balance to Shirdi. Chakra Narain also notes that Baba's *udhi* was being given as a cure and acted as a cure for many cases of illness.