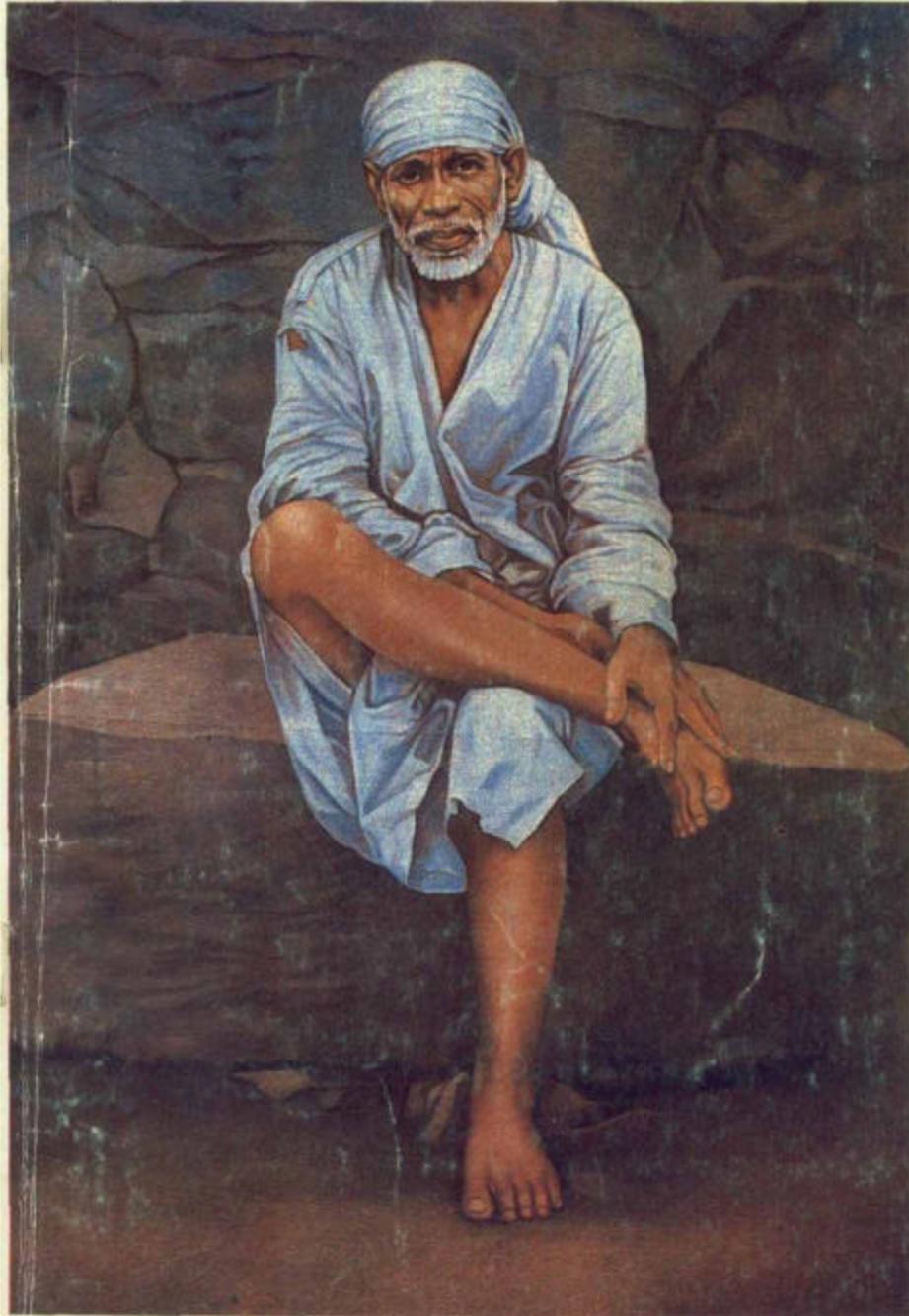


**THE WONDROUS SAINT
SAI BABA**



THE WONDROUS SAINT

SRI SAI BABA
BY
PUJYASRI NARASIMHASWAMIJI

1. A SAINT OF MAHARASTRA

Thou seemest human and divine,
The highest, holiest manhood, Thou.

—In Memoriam,

Who is Sai Baba? Few raise this question. They call (him a *Satpurusha*, and believe that they understand, what (that is. But some do ask; and some answer must be given.

At the very outset, however, one encounters obstacles of various sorts. Apart from those ultra-rationalists to whom the name *Satpurusha* carries with it associations of superstition, miracle-mongering and money-swindling, there are overzealous votaries to whom it is presumption, if not sacrilege, to attempt to understand a *Satpurusha*. One of this latter type approached this writer as he began his first study of saints in the Maharashtra and said, "My dear man, you want to study and understand a *Satpurusha*! Give it up, I tell you, give it up. You cannot understand a *Satpurusha*. It is simply impossible". To the speaker, a *Satpurusha* was suffused with the Infinite glory and perfection of Godhead; and as God is declared to be absolute and unknowable learned Ignorance was to be pitied if it dared to gaze at and study the effulgent *Satpurusha* with a view to paint him in true colours with weak words, in matter-moulded forms of speech. It may be conceded that personality—even one's own—is so difficult to grasp and describe that a saint's is sure to present greater difficulties. One may, however, hope that the presentation of a sketch after a well-conducted inquiry may be of some use to earnest seekers after Truth.

As a Youth :

If biography of saints is difficult, that of Sai Baba is attended with difficulties almost insuperable. A cloud of mystery hangs over all the affairs of his life and completely veils off his birth, parentage and early life. None knows anything about that period. As though he had dropped from another planet, he suddenly appeared at Shirdi (in the Ahmadnagar district) as a lad of sixteen. Moving about hither and thither for a while the young fakir settled at Shirdi taking his residence at first in a hollow under a neem tree and finally at the local mosque. None could discover if he was adopting any *Sadhanas*, But one fine day, when there was no oil in his lamps, he caused a flutter by keeping them burning all night with water alone evidently converting water into oil. He also nursed patients and administered medicines compounded by himself to all and sundry—of course, gratis. But soon he dropped that practice and gave patients and people in distress bits of ashes from the perpetual gee that he kept up; and devils and diseases, infirmities and troubles of all sorts were removed.

Stream of Visitors :

His blessings (*Anugraha*) were constantly sought and given, of course gratis, and proved efficacious in obtaining Issue for the issueless, service for the unemployed. No wonder that he who was first contemptuously ignored as the "crazy fakir" became the centre of attraction at Shirdi drawing crowds from far and near. Among those came a Collector's Chitnis, Nana Saheb Chandorkar, and a constable, Das Ganu, now well-known as a *Kirtankar*, who went about giving a glowing picture everywhere of the greatness of the Shirdi saint. Bombay then began pouring its flood of pious Visitors and curiosity hunters into Shirdi, with a persistence and force that quite transformed the village and its forms of worship.

Scattered Money :

Among the visitors we find Mrs. and Mr. Curtis (Sir George Seymour Curtis), Revenue Commissioner, and Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak. With the advent of this flood of visitors, a large stream of wealth and material for pompous display poured in. The former "poor fakir" was turned (against his will) into a Maharaj or Prince, with silver palanquin, State umbrella, a car, a horse and

preceded by a procession of bearers of silver mace, and all other princely paraphernalia. The income that flowed (chiefly by way of *dakshina*) was, during the last decade of Sai Baba's life, many thousands of rupees every month. But all this pomp and all this wealth served only to set off Baba's humility, holy poverty, non-attachment and purity of life. He literally scattered the moneys flowing into his hands amongst those who gathered around him.

Every morning he began and every evening he ended as a poor pauper fakir; but during the day abundance of money would flow in, and would be quickly disposed of, so much so that during the last two years of his life, income-tax was levied on those who were daily and regular recipients of his favours. Yet up to the very end of his life, Baba's sustenance was the begged bread and vegetable, his raiment was a ragged *kupni* and a skull cloth and his residence was the baw floor of the mosque.

A Frequent Marvel :

Other features of this saint that struck even casual observers were his unaccountable and marvellous knowledge of things and events far removed from him in the matter of time and space, and a remarkable power to foretell coming events or to force events to come to pass in accordance with his supreme will. Visitors noted with surprise that he was frequently mentioning either expressly or by allusion their inmost secret thoughts, their remote past, past of which they had lost all memory and incidents that occurred hundred of mile away from his residence which none could possibly have communicated to him. "He speaks as one seated in my heart (*Antaryami*)", was a remark that frequently escaped from the lips of the visitors and devotees. His power to carry out anything that he wanted was equal to his beneficence and mercy that were as wide as they were deep, knowing no limitations or distinctions of caste, colour or creed. No wonder that even the proudest intellects bowed in submission before him and failed to find any other or more adequate name to express the possession of such wisdom, power and beneficence than God!

Even after he left the body :

Dewan Bahadur G. S. Khaparde, Member of the Council of State said of him in a preface to a short English sketch of Baba, "Sri Sai Baba fulfilled my idea of *God on earth*". In fact, he and a host of men of learning, wealth and position vied with each other in serving at Baba's durbar, in carrying fans or other paraphernalia at the *Aratis* and procession at which Sai Baba was worshipped as an incarnation of God, or as God himself. And even now, though several years have rolled away since Sai Baba's body was placed in the tomb at Shirdi, the *Aratis* and processions continue and the eager throng of ladies and gentlemen, Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor, scholars and rustics still serve at the durbar of Sai and declare in the following words of Bedil, the Sufi of Sind, that *Baba is really alive* and that they have indubitable personal experience of their own of his kindly interest and intervention in their daily life.

"These men do never die,

They become the Praised Once.

They shed mercy on the world with myriad hands;

They help the helpless.

They aid the depressed.

They leave not those that follow them when the time of danger comes.

They are men only in name.

In reality, they are God Himself.

These solitary ones are marvellous".

Personal Experiences :

The study of such a life, however difficult it may be, must certainly be very attractive to the lover of truth—more especially if he is anxious to turn his discoveries to practical account for the betterment of his own temporal and spiritual condition. To aid one in such a study is the aim of this writer or compiler of experiences, in this and the following articles. Many derive more pleasure and even benefit from chewing chopped sugarcane than by sipping the milled juice. And many desire to have the personal experiences of Sai's devotees with all the crispness, the colour and warmth that characterise their narration to a fellow-devotee or sympathetic listener; and these they would be loathe to exchange for

the cold second-hand conclusions extracted there from in this writer's mental mill. Hence it is now proposed to introduce Sai Baba to the readers (especially the public outside the Bombay Presidency) through a series of striking yet credible and candid revelations of experience of several devotees whose credentials are beyond cavil.

II. CRYPTIC WORDS OF SAI BABA

POONA PROFESSOR'S EXPERIENCES

Among the data that B. V. Narasimhaswamy has gathered for the biography of Sai Baba, is a statement from the late Prof. G. G. Narke, M.A.,MSc., Professor of Geology, in the Engineering College of Poona.

Prof. Narke first went to the Saint in 1913 soon after his return from Manchester, and when he was introduced, Sai Baba remarked; "You introduce him to me! I have known him for 30 generations".

That was something strange for an England returned person; but he had another surprise soon after. Here is his own version of it:—

"At the *Arati*, Sai Baba was in a towering passion. He fumed, cursed and threatened for no visible cause. I doubted if he was a madman. That was a passing thought".

"In the afternoon, he stroked my head and said: 'I am not mad.'¹ Nothing is concealed from him. Nothing was beyond him or concealed from him, past, present or future".

No Fakir's Gown :

"My mother was anxious about my employment. I was being tossed from place to place and had often periods of unemployment. Sometimes I had stray fancies that a fakir's life was good for me also".

One day in 1914, Baba had got ready a number of *kupnis* (which are worn by fakirs) and presented a number of people with them. I was watching the distribution from a distance and hoped that one might be conferred upon me. He beckoned to me and placing his hands kindly on my head, stroked it and said: "Don't blame me for not giving you a *kupni*. That Fakir (evidently meaning God) has not permitted me to give you one".

Promise of Job :

"My relations were asking Baba what was to become of me and Baba told them: I will settle him at Poona".

"I got sometimes a number of jobs (*i.e.* prospecting for mines) at the same time and I went to Baba each time relying wholly on his foresight. He would choose the place and always add 'Poona' after it"¹.

"In 1916 I had to choose between an offer from Benares of a professorship and a prospecting job in Burma. Baba told me: 'Go to Burma and Poona'. I always laughed within myself at the addition of Poona, as I was a mining engineer and Poona held no prospects for me".

Solved soon :

"It was in 1917 that the announcement was made that a Professor of Geology was wanted for the Engineering College at Poona. I asked Baba if I should try for the place. He said 'Yes' and I went to Poona. After I left, he asked: "Where is Narke gone?" He was told that I had gone for the appointment. 'Allah will bless,' was Baba's remark".

"Even in 1913, Baba was seeing my present permanent appointment as Professor of Geology in Poona which I have held since 1918"*.

Cryptic Language :

"Baba's language was highly cryptic, full of symbology. A literal translation would be made by superficial people who would then conclude that he was a worldly man among worldly men, and very avaricious at that".

"For instance, a man came to Baba and watched him for a time. Asked for his impressions, he said: 'I never saw any saint till now talking of money all the hours of the day.' This man did not know that *paisa* was used by Baba to denote merit (*punya*) and not money".

"One day Baba asked me several times to give him Rs. 15 as *dakshina*. I had then no money and he knew it full well. So when I was alone with him, I said: Baba, you know I have no money, and why do you ask for Rs. 15 *dakshina*?"

The Dakshina :

"Baba answered that he knew my impecunious condition well enough. 'But', he added, 'you are reading a book now. The part you are now reading is specially important. Get me Ks. 15 *dakshina* from that'."

"I was reading *Yoga Vasishtha*. Getting money out of it meant deriving valuable lessons therefrom; and giving the money to Baba of course meant lodging the lessons in my heart."

III. SAINTS SEE MUCH FARTHER WHEN FAVOURS ARE REFUSED

The ways of saints are often mysterious. The favours they grant or sometimes perplexing as also their refusals; and it takes quite a long time for the votary to realise that they see much farther.

Prof. G. G. Narke mentions several incidents of that type in his statement on Sri Sai Baba. Here is one :

"In 1914 or thereabouts a rich old gentleman of Harda came with a lady to Shirdi. He was suffering from T. B. consumption. During the space of one month there was noticeable improvement in his health. So he made Shirdi his residence. At the end of the second month, he grew worse and his end seemed to be approaching. One day the ladies of his house and their friends told me that his condition was critical and there was no senior male to go and ask Baba for help and some one to ask for the *Udhi*. I went up. Baba told me that the man would be better for quitting this earth. "What can the *Udhi* do? Anyhow take the *Udhi* and give it, as it is wanted!" So I took and gave the *Udhi* but, of course, refrained from intimating Baba's words to any one*".

'Saved from Pain :

"The condition grew worse. Then another of his relations arrived and went to Baba and told him of the imminent death. Baba appears to have said "How can he die? In the morning *he will come to life*," This was taken to mean that the old man would not quit his body. So they placed lamps all round the corpse and waited till noon. Life was not restored to the corpse. Funeral ceremonies followed. The Harda gentleman's relations thought that Baba had given them

false hopes and went away from Shirdi. For three years they did not return to Shirdi".

"Then one day a relative of the deceased saw Baba in a dream, with, with the deceased's head over his own and Baba disclosed the lungs in rotten state, and said "From the torture of all this, I have saved him." Thereafter, he and his relations renewed their visits to Shirdi. Baba's words "How can he *die*? He will come to life"* evidently referred to *survival of human personality* after death and taking up new forms of life in fresh bodies.

IV. RAMA AND KRISHNA AS AVATARS

Very little is known of Sai Baba's early life; but he had told several of his devotees that his guru was a Brahmin, and even mentioned his name—states Prof. G.G.Narke, recalling his reminiscences of the great saint.

Once, as a result of a disputation between Prof. Narke and some fellow-devotees, a few pointed questions were put to Sai Baba:

Q:—Are the Puranas true?

A:—Yes; true.

Q:—What about Rama and Krishna?

A:—They were great souls; gods they were; Avatars.

Q:—This Narke will not admit all that; and he say you are *not god*.

A:—What he says is true. But I am your father and you should not speak like that. You have to get your benefit and everything from me.

In certain ecstatic moments, Sai Baba said "*I am God*" *Main Allahum*: but his usual role was that of a *devotee, entrusted with vast powers to carry out the wishes of God (the Fakir)*.

Determinism :

Sai Baba was bold in his dealings with persons and occasionally infused faith in his devotees by even defiance of sanitary precautions. Prof. Narke has himself one such experience.

"Baba used to get sweetmeat for *naivedya* from one H. One day in 1916, H lay a plague-stricken corpse. Plague was raging at Shirdi. Baba asked me to go and get the sweetmeat from H's shop. I went and told the wife, who was

weeping, of Baba's order. She pointed to the corpse and said I might take the sweetmeat from the almirah. I took it trembling with the fear that by this I might catch the infection and others too. That was given as *naivedya*. Baba told me, "Do you think you will live if you are away from Shirdi and that you would die if you stay at Shirdi? That is not so. Whosoever is to die will die; whosoever is to be caressed will be caressed."

Baba set the example of living amidst society and *labouring*. He ground grain into flour. He was not for ascetic desertion of society, nor for begging. Though he himself begged within limits, it was for a little food only; when he demanded *dakshina* that was for a number of reasons, chiefly for clearing *rinanubanda*. He wanted the general run of visitors to continue their *grahasta* lives and did not advocate Sanyas.

Sri Sai Baba's demand for *dakshina* was explained by him to a visitor. "Do I ask of every one? I demand only from those whom the *Fakir* (God) points out to me." He demanded only particular sums and would not accept anything more.

V. Mrs. MANAGER'S REMINISCENCES

"We used to go and sit near Sri Sai Baba at his mosque. At the usual time, any one could go up and bow before him and sit there. On one occasion as I was seated at a short distance from Sri Sai Baba, there came a leper to the mosque, His disease was far advanced. He was stinking and he had little strength left in him, so that it was with much difficulty and very slowly he clambered up the three steps of the mosque, moved on to the *Dhuni* (fire) and then to Sri Sai Baba and placed his head on Baba's feet. It took much time for him to take his *Dakshirta*, and I, feeling the stench from him intensely, hoped he would clear off. At last when he got down slowly carrying a small parcel wrapped up in a dirty cloth, I felt relief and said within myself 'Thank God. He is off.' Sri Sai Baba at once darted a piercing glance at me, and I knew that he read my thought."

Fetches Back :

"Before the leper had gone far, Sri Sai Baba called out and sent some one to fetch him back. The man came. It was again the slow process of his clambering up, emitting foul stench all the time; and as the man bowed, Baba

picked up that parcel saying, "What is this?" and opened it. It contained *tome pedas* and Baba took up a piece and gave it to me—to me alone of all present!—and asked me to eat it. What horror! To eat up a thing brought by the stinking leper; but it was Sri Sai Baba's order, and there was no option but to obey. So I ate it up. Baba took another piece and himself swallowed it and then sent the man away with the remainder."

A Lesson in Fraternity :

"Why he was re-called and I alone was chosen to be the recipient of *his peda*, none then understood. But I knew fully well that Sri Sai Baba had read my heart and was teaching me valuable lessons e.g., in humility, fraternity, sympathy, endurance and trust in His Supreme wisdom rather than in my own notions of hygiene and sanitation for saving me from disease."

Mrs. Manager mentions the incident in her reminiscences of Sri Sai Baba. And though this was a somewhat unpleasant experience, he was all kindness, and she herself experienced it on numerous occasions.

Mysterious Orders :

Sometimes, Sri Sai Baba's mysterious orders seemed even cruel, and that was how she felt when the saint asked her husband to accompany two other devotees on a pleasure trip to Ahmednagar and Poona which, because he was poor and unemployed, he could ill afford. Moreover, he had just come from Poona and intended to stay for sometime at Shirdi! So he submitted to Baba that he had no business at Ahmednagar or Poona. But Baba's *order* was again peremptory and he gave *no explanation*.

A Strange Thing :

"My husband, feeling that there was no appeal, obeyed Baba's order and accompanied the party. At Ahmednagar, they went to the cinema, and my husband felt he had not gone for such *thamashas* to Baba. Then, they left for Poona with my husband. Here came up a strange thing. The day previous to their arrival, there was a strike of mill hands. The directors wanted a reliable and capable manager to meet the situation. They had thought of my husband and had sent a message for him to Bombay or other places where

he was likely to be found. When they were in this plight my husband went there and at once they appointed him manager Here was Baba's power—seeing what had happened or was to happen and how a chance of suitable *appointment* was available for my husband, and his *kindness* in sending my husband to be there at the nick of time to get the employment-for which he had gone to Shirdi.

VI. HEALING POWERS OF SAINTS EARTH OR ASH SUFFICES

Several of our great saints are known to have exercised great healing powers; and the "medicines" they used were often surprising.

Similar was the case with Sri Sai Baba and Mrs Manager mentions a few such cases in the following statement of her reminiscences.

"When he had difficulties to get over, we never had to speak. We had merely to go and sit or stand in his presence. He at once knew what the matter was and gave directions exactly meeting our requirements. We had our servant with us at Shirdi. He had acute pain in his lumbar region and was sorely distressed. My husband went to Sai Baba and was standing. Some others were also present. Baba suddenly said, "Hallo, my leg is paining. Great is the pain". Someone suggested that something should be done to relieve the pain.

Green Leaves :

"Yes." said Baba. "If green leaves are heated and applied over it, it will go away",

"What leaves, Baba?" was the query of some one.

"Those green leaves near the Lendi".

One suggested one leaf and another a different leaf. One finally asked if it was *korphad*. (

"Yes," Baba said. "That is it. The leaf has to be split into, slightly heated over the fire and applied. That is all".

The Real Cure :

"Sai Baba's cure for our servant was not a medicine for all. *Korphadvi* tried for others and failed. It was Baba's special blessing that operated to cure

and not the *Korphad*, On other occasions he had picked up a bit of earth and given it as a remedy and it was successfully used. Similarly Madhav Rao Deshpande's inflammation of the eyes was cured by application of pepper. And Dada Kelkar's growth of a film over the eyes was removed by application of a bit of coke crust under a baking pan mixed with water — at prescribed by Baba.

Drawing Diseases :

"Still more wondrous was his curing deepseated organic diseases abruptly and suddenly — -without any visible application of remedy or treatment. Scientists and medical men may disbelieve this. But having actually experienced it in my own case and noticed that of others who came before Sri Sai Baba. I cannot disbelieve such cases and what is most peculiar— the drawing of diseases on to himself by pure will-power.

My eyes have been giving me trouble constantly. On one occasion while I was at Shirdi, they were greatly paining me and water was freely flowing from them. In such a condition I went and sat up before Baba. He looked at me. My eyes ceased to pain and water. But his eyes were dropping tears."

VII. SHOWN IN A VISION

HOW A SADHAK WAS DRAWN TO SAI BABA

"To me Sai Baba is not gone. He is, even now".

"To me he had no limitation. Of course when he was with us, there was the fleshy tabernacle. Now that the body is cast off, the infinite alone remains as Sai Baba".

With this declaration an esteemed Judge in the North opens his statement on the great saint of Shirdi; and Judge Sahib's introduction to him was" as remarkable as his later experiences.

Early in life, Judge Sahib had made great progress in spirituality. Vishnu was the object of his meditations; and the picture of Dhruva-Narayana impressed him most.

Three Incidents :

"I constantly meditated on that picture; but when I tried to concentrate on Vishnu. Dhruva's figure frequently obtruded and so I cut off that portion of the

picture. I also made a special appeal that in that blank space in the picture Vishnu should place me" he writes, and proceeds:

"In this way, my meditation on Narayana continued till my twenty-first year*.

Then, one day, I was either sleeping and had dreams or I had trance visions. I cannot say what it was. But the following three experiences I had in the course of one night".

"As-I was in the lying posture on my bed, I felt a change. I was perceiving that the body lay separate and I was disengaged from it; and in front of me stood the figure of Vishnu-Narayana. This ended; and about an hour later, a second incident followed.

"Again my body lay there on the bed. I was outside it. Sri Vishnu-Narayana was standing before me. And by his side stood another figure. Sri Vishnu pointed to the other figure, and said, "This Sai Baba of Shirdi, is your man; you must resort to him".

Strange Meeting :

The third incident or vision followed soon after:

"I felt I was moving in some strange way. It was like levitation in the air. I came thus or was carried thus to a village. I found some one there and asked him what that village was. He said it was Shirdi. I asked him, "Is there any person named Sai Baba here?" "Yes", he answered,

"come and see". I was taken to the mosque. There I saw Sai Baba. He was seated with legs outstretched. I went and reverently placed my head on his feet. He got up and said, "Do you take *my darsan*? I am *your debtor*, I must take *your darsan*" and he placed his head on my feet. Then we parted".

"These visions impressed me greatly. Before that time I had seen a picture of Sai Baba in the usual seated posture and I knew nothing more about him. I did not then know that Baba often sat with both legs outstretched".

"Sometime later I started on my first visit to Baba, and tried to verify my visions and to see if Sri Sai Baba was my destined Guru as indicated in the dream".

First Repulsed :

"When I went to Sri Sai Baba at the mosque, there were many others with him. I went and prostrated, placing my head on his feet. He then said "What! Why do you worship a man?" At once I retreated some distance and sat. I felt the rebuff very keenly. I had, it is true, my scholastic notions that men should not be worshipped; and I thought Sai Baba was hitting at me for going to him, with such notions lingering in my head. I felt deeply mortified and continued to sit for some hours. Then all had cleared off, leaving Baba alone on the floor of the mosque. That was in the afternoon. It was believed that none should go to Baba at that time, lest any serious harm should be inflicted as a penalty for the intrusion. But in my state of mind such harm did not deter me. So I went nearer and nearer to the place where Baba sat. While I was some yards off, Baba gently beckoned to me to approach him. Thus encouraged I went and placed my head on his feet. He at once hugged me, bade me sit close to him, and thus addressed me: "*You are my child. When others i.e., strangers are in the company, we keep the children off*". My apparent rejection or expulsion earlier in the day having been thus satisfactorily explained, I felt the full force of his deep and intense love for me and my heart responded to it. There was my Saviour, my Guru, the man of my destiny, found at last*".

VIII. BOOKS BRING BHRAMA NOT BRAHMA

SAI BABA'S ADVICE

On one *Guru Poornima* day, numerous devotees came to Sri Sai Baba and as usual placed a book before him so that he might return it with his asirvada or blessing for them to study it with profit and benefit. Sri Sai Baba, however, took up a book brought by one man and gave it to another as he often does. On that occasion every one had a book except myself. Baba then looked at me and pointing to the books said; "In these books they want to find *Brahma* (God). There is however *Bhrama* (delusion or confusion) in them. You are all right. Do not read books - but keep me in your heart. If you harmonise head and heart, that is enough".

Judge Saheb mentions this incident in his reminiscences of Sri Sai Baba, and adds, that he has been following that advice with advantage.

"Baba did not prescribe ' adds the Judge Saheb "one uniform spiritual exercise or practice for all. He suited himself to the stage, circumstances and conditions of each". "If you are a Rama Bhakta, keep to it. If you want only Allah, keep to it", was his advice.

"If I am asked what I would suggest to one who wished to find out how he (not having seen Sri Sai Baba in the flesh) could make himself a devotee of Sri Sai Baba and get his help, my answer is that he should whole-heartedly pour his heart in love to Sri Sai Baba. It is not essential that he should go to Shirdi for the purpose, though Shirdi associations are undoubtedly helpful. All that he should do is to transcend the senses and concentrate with love on Sri Sai Baba. He would certainly reach and obtain the help of Sri Sai Baba- to obtain all that he is fit to achieve or receive.

IX. FANATIC LEARNS A LESSON

Sri Sai Baba had devotees belonging to all races, and Invariably all felt quite at ease in his presence. He advised people to advance along path congenial to themselves; and invariably, he dissuaded intolerance. Sometimes he pronounced or got some one to pronounce *fatia* over Hindu offerings also. There was - as a rule - no sharp distinction or antagonism between the devotion of Hindu and Mohammedans to him. There were, however, some exceptions. One of these, Judge Saheb mentions in his reminiscences.

"About 1916 two "Rohillas" came to Shirdi and became devoted to Sri Sai Baba. The elder one was constantly with Baba and used to read the *Koran* at night, especially sitting at the feet of Baba".

Music in Mosque :

"He declared that Baba was *Paygambar*, (i.e. Prophet) and showed great reverence. At times he said that though Baba was *Paygambar*, he was still teaching heterodox doctrines. Baba's allowing the din of noon day *Arati* with its music in the mosque, allowing himself to be worshipped as God there and partaking of food offered to idols were highly heterodox and the Kohilla

mentioned his objections to Baba. But Baba only smiled and said, "*All that* (i.e., other Gods) *is Allah*". This was one of Baba's moods. In some moods, he would say: "We are all the *creatures* of God-Allah". In other moods, he would say: "I am God".

Taught a Lesson :

"This, of course, was extreme heterodoxy in the Rohilla's view. So one day he declared that, although Sri Sai Baba was *Paygambar*, yet his doctrine was wrong and so he would make short work of Baba and his doctrine. As Sri Sai Baba was going out walking, the Rohilla came up from behind with a stout club in his right hand and reached striking distance. Baba turned towards him and seizing his left wrist cast a glance at him, beneath which the poor Rohilla covered and sank like a lump of lead, powerless to lift his club or even to lift himself. Baba left him there and went away. IMF, the man had to be raised up with some one's help. In a few days, he took leave of Baba and left Shirdi".

"Of course, intolerance was not confined to this Muslim devotee. There were some Hindu devotees, who exhibited the same trait but Baba always discountenanced it".

X. WORLDLY WISDOM AND WEALTH

SAI BABA TEACHES A LESSON

One remarkable feature of Sri Sai Baba's life was the "insistent demand for money, *dakshina*, from his devotees.

Never, of course, was the money kept by him. It would immediately be distributed.

The money was generally asked from the rich but what was Sai Baba's aim? Judge Saheb narrates in his reminiscences, the following incident, stressing also its moral.

"Once I had taken 100 rupees with me to Shirdi in my" pocket. Sai Baba asked me *for dakshina of Rs 40*. I readily gave it. A little later he asked for another 40 rupees' and' that too was given with equal readiness and joy. Finally, he asked me for the remaining twenty and that also I gave -him. I was happy to give him although I was left without a pie in the result. '

Go and Borrow :

"Then again Baba sent for me and asked me for *dakshina*. I said I had nothing to give. Then he suggested that I should go and get money from some others. I agreed but told Baba that if he should indicate whom I was to go to, I would gladly go and ask him. Baba said "Go to Shama". I went to him and told him what took place and asked him for money. He replied that I had not understood Baba alright: "Does Baba care a rap for your rupees? No, what he wants is your mind and heart, your time and soul to be devoted to him. That is his meaning". I went back to Baba and reported what Shama had said.

"Then Baba smiled and said "Go to Dixit and ask him"; I went to Mr. Dixit and told him of what Baba had bidding me to do. He then replied that Baba's direction to me had to be understood in the circumstances as a lesson to me that I should not feel absence of money or the begging for money or for anything else to be a humiliation and that I should not esteem myself to be above begging

Wordly Wisdom

I went back and reported Dixit's reply to Baba. He smiled and then asked me to go to Nana Saheb Chandorkar and ask him for a loan. I went to Khandobas temple where Nana Saheb was reading some religious books and told him all that had occurred and Baba's order that I should approach him for money. Nana Saheb at once showed his worldly wisdom. He said that he knew how delicate the situation was when Baba asked for *dakshina* and that I should profit by his plans and ways. "Whenever I go to Shirdi, he said, 'I start with a certain sura, and leave a half at Kopergaon e.g., on this occasion I came with Rs. 200, out of which I have left 103 rupees at Kopergaon and come down to Shirdi with only 100 rupees. I go on giving *dakshina* out of the stock in hand to Baba and when it is exhausted, I send for the reserve at Kopergaon. You must act like this".

Put to the Test :

"I went back to Baba and told him what Nana said. While I sat there, Baba sent for Nana and asked him for *dakshina* - Rs. 40. He paid it and went away.

Again he sent for him and asked for 40 rupees more. That was paid and again Nana was sent for and the last amount was paid up and at once he sent some one to Kopergaon for his reserve fund. Then Baba at once wanted more. Nana felt humiliated at having to say 'no' as there was no time for the Kopergaon reserve to arrive. The lesson that was then taught to him, to me, and to all was that it was presumption on the part of any one to think that he himself was the great Providence supplying the needs of Baba, or that anyone could supply all that Baba might ask for".

"Thus Baba showed me how differently the demand for *dakshina* was interpreted by devotees. The real explanation of Baba's demand in this case was not what Shama, Dixit or Nana said it was. It was evidently to teach a lesson to all of us. Baba really cared nothing for money or for presents. What he really wanted was love, deep, intense, passionate, whole-hearted love".

XI. SAI BABA AND NANA SAHEB SHAPING OF THE DEVOTEE

If Sai Baba is known to and worshipped by thousands— nay tens of thousands, to their great temporal and spiritual advantage to-day, the credit is in no small measure due to the late Narayan Govind Chandorkar, commonly known as Nana Saheb.

Born in a well-to-do family of pious Brahmin Parents, he quickly graduated and entering Government service, rapidly rose to the position of the personal Assistant to the Collector in 1887. Shortly thereafter came to him the call from Baba which entirely transformed his life.

The First Call :

One day when he was camping at Kopergaon, for Jama-bandi, Appa, a village officer of Shirdi, came and told him that Sai Baba wanted him to call at Shirdi. This message was disbelieved as Nana Saheb had never seen Baba and had nothing to do with him. Appa was ridiculed and Nana added that even if there was a real call, he was not prepared to go , to Shirdi. Baba repeated his message a second time with the same result. Sibyllike, Baba sent his message for the third time and Nana came at last to see him. After prostrating himself at

Baba's feet and presenting him with some almond and candied sugar, Nana asked why he had been sent for. Baba said "Nana, there are so many in the world. Do I send for them? You and I have been connected with each other for four generations. You are not aware of that fact. But I am. Be visiting me when time permits".

Nana went back, somewhat impressed by Baba's weird knowledge of prenatal history, but fancied that Baba and his powers had little to do with his own present life. The seed of faith had been sown however and was gently developing unperceived. Baba was not the person to neglect the plant he himself sowed.

A Safe Guide :

When plague broke out in Bombay, inoculation was the only known preventive and Collectors of various districts were keen on its spread. But this prophylactic being a new discovery there was a widespread apprehension that it might to harm; and in order to induce the general public to submit to it, officials and other men of position were called upon to set an example by inoculating themselves. Nana Saheb had his fears. Then it struck him that Sri Sai Baba would be the safest guide for him to consult. When he went to Shirdi, Baba assured him that there was absolutely nothing to fear and bade him to go in for inoculation. Thus encouraged, Nana Saheb got inoculated and strange to say, there was neither fever nor swelling, nor any other harm. Encouraged by his example, large numbers of the intelligentsia and in their wake, an appreciable section of the general public, submitted to inoculation and obtained immunity; from the epidemic. Nana's faith in Baba was strengthened and his visits to Shirdi became more frequent.

Stranded on a Hill:

Sometime later, Nana Saheb went up a barren shadeless, . waterless hill, known as Harischandra Hill. When he ,was half-way up, the scorching heat of summer told on his system and he felt the pangs of thirst. But there was no water -any water to be seen and no shade to rest under. He sat on a rock and exclaimed that *if Sri Sai Baba were present there,* js,,he would .surely provide

him with water. A friend by his side reminded him that "ifs" were no use, that Sri SaLBaba was at Shirdi scores of miles away and that he should try and ... get up to walk up or walk down. But poor Nana Saheb was unable to move even a few steps.

Just at this juncture Sri Sai Baba was seated at his mosque at Shirdi. He remarked to those present, "What shall we do? Nana is thirsty. He is panting for water and the heat (of summer) is great. A little water at least must be given to him". None of the listeners understood, the exact implication of what Baba spoken.

The Relief:

On the Hill, Nana Saheb, after a short spell of gful silence, looked up and saw a Bhil passing by. "Well my friend"; cried Nana, "I am very thirsty. Can a little water be had here to drink?" "Dear!" replied the Bhil "under the very rock you are sitting upon, water is available"¹. And the Bhil went away. Nana's friends then, with much effort pushed away the rock he sat on; and lo! there was under it was potable water just enough to quench one man's thirst. How could any one have known of its presence there? None could discover how and when that water got there. Nana felt that Baba must have provided it.

Some days later Nana went to Shirdi and Baba's first words to him were: "What Nana did you get water?" Nana shed tears of joy and his faith was greatly strengthened. People there told him of Baba's reference to him and his thirst oivthe memorable day, Nana placed himself thenceforward, entirely under Baba's protection and was often thinking of him.

XIII POWER OVER BIRTH AND DEATH

Nana's daughter lost the child within a few months, and had lost her husband some months earlier. She thus becomes an issueless widow at the age of seventeen. This cast a gloom over the whole family. Sometime later, Nana Saheb went with his family to Baba and sat in glum silence before him.

Baba: Why are you so silent?

Nana: You know everything. While we are under your care, these calamities have befallen us, loss of child, loss of son-in-law, etc.,

Baba: If you care for child, etc., don't come to me for these. These are not in my power. These (i.e., birth of child and death of relatives) are dependent on Poorva Karma. Even Parameshwar, Great God Himself, who has created this entire world cannot alter these. Do you think He can tell the Sun or Moon "Rise some two yards farther away from your appointed place?" No, He cannot and will not. That will produce disorder, chaos.

Nana: If that is so, how is it that you tell some one that he will have a son and he gets a son and you tell another that he will get employment, and he gets it? Are these not your *chamatkar* i.e., miracles?

NO MIRACLES:

Baba: No, Nana, I perform no miracles. You have your village astrologers; They work two or four days ahead and give out their predictions. Some of them come true. I look farther ahead. What I say happens. My art also is a sort of astrology. But you people do not understand this. To you, my words look like miracles – because you do not know the future. So you regard events as proofs of my miracle-working power and turn your reverence to me. I, in my turn, direct your reverence to God, and see that you are really benefited.

"SURRENDER ESSENTIAL PROTECTION" – GITA PROMISE:

These words of Baba strongly remind one of Lord Buddha's interdiction against "Miracle-working". Yet according to the popular view Lord Buddha worked many a miracle. These apparent self-contradictions in Buddha and Krishna have their explanation and some attempt will be made in later chapter to offer some hints on the subject. Here it is enough to say that Baba was referring to certain facts as fixed by superhuman agency, which man has to accept and face. He was frequently saying in the words of Kabir, 'You must be content with the lot assigned to you by God.' "Have Faith and Patience". Baba taught both by example and precept that real happiness and success in life here and hereafter come to the man who grasps not, but renounces, who surrenders all his will to his God and Guru. Baba helped his sincere devotees to make this surrender, by attending to every want of theirs, once they tried to make their surrender or even

started making it. Did not Krishna say that he attends to the welfare of those who surrender themselves and think solely of Him at all times with complete faith?

XIV HOW TO CONQUER SEX PASSION

Besides Contentment, Renunciation and Surrender many other lessons were taught by Baba to Nana. For example, the conquest of the six internal enemies, the attraction of woman and wealth, anger, covetousness, delusion, pride, and jealousy – was pressed home and Baba even inflicted light punishments or rebuke for the neglect of lessons imparted.

One day as Nana was seated by Baba's side, a young Muslim lady unveiled her face and placed it on Baba's feet and in a few seconds resumed her veil. But her face was one of rare beauty and Nana Saheb was so much smitten with her beauty that he wished very much to see her face once more. At once Baba slapped him on the thigh and after the lady left the premises asked Nana, if he knew the reason for the slap on the thigh.

THE INNER BEAUTY:

Nana: How can I hide anything from the Omniscience of my Guru? But I do not understand how such low thoughts should sway my mind when I am in your immediate presence.

Baba: You are a man after all, are you not? The body is swayed by desires, which spring up as soon as a sense-object approaches within sight. But are there not many lovely and well coloured temples? Do we go there to admire the exterior or to see and worship the God within? When you are seeing God, does your mind care for the outside beauty? God is to be seen in every object as much as in temples. Seeing a human form we have not to busy ourselves with the exterior beauty or ugliness but only to concentrate on the form and nature of God. There is no harm in looking at the exterior. But that must be accompanied by reverential awe at the power of God to produce such beautiful bodies and by a desire to see how God resides therein and admire His beauty. Nana, if you had thought on these lines, no desire to have a second look at the young lady's face would have crept into you. Bear this in mind.

A REMARKABLE LADY SAINT:

Nana did keep this lesson in mind and he had a good opportunity to manifest his reverence for a very beautiful Muslim lady, named Bannu Mayi. She was aged only about twenty but was in a highly advanced spiritual condition. Leaving her mother at her home in Bhodegaon, she would be roaming stark-naked everywhere and often concealed herself in prickly pear bushes. There were plenty of thorns embedded in her body and she never cared to extract them. She did not care for meals or sleep. Her mother and other villagers believed her to be insane. Only a few believed her to be a Saint. Nana Saheb was one of the few. He knew that it was a hard feat to get her to sit a while and receive his worship. So he went to Baba and wanted his permission and blessings for the success of his enterprise. Baba first pointed out that there was no need to go and see that saint; seeing that Nana was persistent and pure in his intention, blessed him with the assurance that he would succeed in getting the lady's darsan.

AMONG THE THORNS:

Nana Saheb went up to the saint's village and made a vigorous search for her and numerous enquiries about her whereabouts, all to no purpose. Nay, the inquiries were resented by some villagers who could not appreciate such inquiries about that naked lady. Nana was getting hopeless of success. He closed his eyes in prayer to Baba. As soon as he opened his eyes, there in front of him, on the road stood Bannu Mayi. He fell at her feet and tried to extract some thorns. But the impatient saint ran away into some prickly pear bushes where he could not follow her; and she disappeared. Nana Saheb had taken with him a companion who tried to induce him to get back to Ahmednagar. But Nana had planned a large programme of service. He had put up a tent and laced within it all accessories for a warm bath including warm water, scented oil, soap nut powder, a new saree, a bodice, a neck-string with a bit of gold in it, (Mangala Sutra), etc., He relied on Baba's blessings and prayed to Baba again.

STRANGE APPEARANCE:

In an instant, the saint returned and without any invitation entered the tent, had her bath and wore the clothes and the ornament. Nana Saheb fell at her feet

and worshipped her. Instantly she got up, flung away all drapery and ornament and disappeared. News spread in the village about this marvellous transformation of Bannu Mayi into a well-clad and bedecked lady; and her mother came up and saw the tent and the articles. She then poured the vials of her wrath on the devoted head of Nana, convinced that he could have no other than low and sordid desires in approaching her daughter, and she disbelieved the statement that the transformation was due to Baba's power. Anyhow, she was placated by being allowed to take away all the articles presented to and discarded by her daughter.

Nana Saheb retired for rest and refreshment to a temple in that village. He bolted the door of the sanctuary room from within and spent his night alone with the image. Early morning he prayed Baba (with closed eyes) that before he left the village in the morning he might be granted one more opportunity to worship the lady saint. As soon as he opened his eyes there sat Bannu Mayi within the bolted sanctuary, into which it was impossible for any ordinary human being to enter. Nana worshipped the saint and she disappeared.

XV. SRI SAI BABA AS MATCH-MAKER DEVOTEE'S NOTICE OF 24 HOURS

Sri Sai Baba, endowed with highest Siddhis and lofty realisation, set himself to the task of towing dull souls on their spiritual roads, and issued wide charters for the protection of all their interests whether trivial or highly momentous. Marriage of daughters is classed in the latter category, especially by those who have a large quiverful of such progeny. Sai's help has endeared him to the devotees, who style him their 'Ayi' (i.e., mother) and in such cases as their 'Matchmaking Ayi or Mamma'. A few instances will suffice to show how well he deserves that epithet.

Mr. G. D. Pandit of Colaba was wandering hither and thither for two years in quest of a bridegroom. Finally he made a vow that if he should secure one in fifteen days, he would start on pilgrimage to see Baba at Shirdi. Then an eligible young gentleman of distant Hyderabad came of his own accord to Pandit's house, took a fancy for his daughter and wedded her within fifteen days.

Help for Helpless :

A poor orphan girl had naturally innumerable obstacles in finding a match for herself. She was then advised to make a daily pious study of Sai Sitcharita - Baba's life. And she started that study. The very next day, a person arrived on the scene, took interest in her, made the necessary inquiries, and married her within a week.

These are ordinary cases. Below are given instances of the indubitable intervention of Baba's mighty hand working amidst mystery with irresistible force.

Mr. Ganash Keshav Rege, a staunch devotee of Baba, in rather poor circumstances (though an Amin of the Holkar's State) wrote dolorous lines in the Sai Lila Magazine about the lot of those who have a superabundance of feminine issue 'End whose conception of Paradise must be a place where there are no more daughters to dispose of. In order to get a husband for his fourth daughter, he took leave and was tossing from post to pillar and pillar to post. Sometimes he seemed to be on the verge of success, but an unkind fate was shattering his hopes at the crucial moment.

Voice of Command :

One day he sat at Anjangaon steeped in care. Suddenly he heard the words "Go to Jirapur". The words were loud and clear but not uttered by any visible or traceable person. One of the ways adopted by Baba for his beneficent activity is to send his devotee an "Asariri Vali" (a voice without a body to utter it) and create a strong conviction that the voice is Baba's. Mr. Rege felt this conviction and concluded that Baba had issued an order, evidently to settle the marriage problem. But how could a visit to Jirapur serve any useful purpose? He knew none there and had no business or influence in that locality. While he was yet wondering, he got an additional surprise, an order to rejoin duty and join at Jirapur. Here evidently was Baba's hand, giving him facilities to carry out his order. So he went and joined duty as ordered and made inquiries about the matrimonial possibilities of this new field. He then found at Soyath, a village some distance off, an eligible person. Negotiations were quickly carried through

and within a month of that "bodiless voice" his daughter's wedding was an accomplished fact.

Bridegroom Mentioned :

Mr. Ganesh D. Vaidya's younger daughter had to be married. After repeated unsuccessful efforts to find a son-in-law, the anxious father was feeling very much worried. One morning Baba appeared to him in a dream and saying "Why are you anxious? Kesava Dixit has a son", showed him the figure of that boy. He got up in wonder as he had never heard of any such persons as Kesava Dixit and his son. Mr. Vaidya's son however informed him that some Dixit, son of Kesava, and with the features seen in the dream was in his office though the community to which he belonged had yet to be ascertained. On further inquiry about community, fitness, willingness etc., Kesava Dixit's son was traced and married to Miss Vaidya.

Dowry Temptation :

The next case is still more striking. Mr. Gopal Ganesh Sircuiytn had been an ardent devotee of Sri Sai Baba since 1911. He had vision of Baba at his own place several times and frequently obtained by prayer quick relief for his troubles. About 1924, he had entered into a "gentleman's agreement" with a friend, that his daughter should wed the latter's son after some years. But as years passed, the boy's progress in collegiate education raised his value, and his father resiled from the agreement and was arranging a match elsewhere that would bring in a good Karini i.e., a handsome 'bridegroom price'. When this reached Mr. Shiriyan's ears he felt very much annoyed. To whom could he unburden his sorrow and complain, except to the "Ay!" ever present with him? In answer, Sri Sai gave a remarkable and definite assurance: "Do not worry yourself. I will get you that same boy as your son-in law in two years' time". Sometime thereafter, the new arrangements by the boy's father fell through. As days passed, the conscience of the educated youth (evidently spurred on by Sri Sai from within) became so assertive that he impressed on his parents the extreme impropriety of breaking one's plighted word to secure a pecuniary

profit. At last, the friend confirmed the original pact and celebrated the marriage, within the limit of time fixed by Baba.

Quite Punctual :

We shall close with one more instance of Baba's "match promoting" after his Mahasamadhi. A sister of Mr. Moreshwar Balakrishna Chowhan had to be married. In 1923, a certain gentleman had expressed himself as satisfied with the young lady; but a formal letter of acceptance had to be sent by him to complete contact. For 6 months Mr. Chowhan's mother waited and was well nigh despairing of it. One night she approached the portrait of Baba that she worshipped and said "Baba! You give experience of your miraculous powers to all. Why not give it to us? My daughter is still a spinster and I am greatly worried over it. If you have any power, then I must get a reply approving of the match by to-morrow". This was in effect, a notice challenging Baba to prove within 24 hours that his reputation for achieving wonders for his devotees was well-founded. That night she dreamed that on the next morning at 9 a.m. as she sat by her son's side, the postman delivered a letter containing the final acceptance. In point of fact, at 9 a.m. next morning she sat by him and began to narrate the dream. The postman then peeped in and dropped a letter. That was from the long hesitating party and containing the acceptance she had so long waited for. Baba stood the assay. He is sterling gold.

XVI. THE ARROGANCE OF WEALTH SAT BABA STRESSES THE MORAL

Sri Sai Baba told Nana Saheb one day that he would give him advice about wealth and that Nana should follow it. Nana promised.

Baba said "If any one begs for anything in your power or possession, give it if you can. If you cannot, give a suave negative reply. Do not mock, ridicule or get angry with the applicant. If you do not like to give do not say that you have not got the article when in fact you have. Do not resort to such indirect methods. Will you remember?"

Some months later, Nana was being pressed by a saint at Kopergaon (which lay on his way from Ahmadnagar to Shirdi) to provide funds for building a stone flight of steps to the Dattu Temple -a temple which Nana always visited

enroute to Shirdi. Nana had promised a gift of Rs. 300 but came on this occasion without any money for the construction. He felt it some what distressing to go to the temple as usual, as he would have to explain to the saint why no money was brought. So he deviated from his straight route and took an unusual bypath to avoid the temple and the saint. The bypath was full of thorns and both Nana and his friend ran thorns in their feet and other parts of their body.

Would not Talk : (Mitra dandam abashanam)

When they reached Shirdi, Baba would not, for a long time, welcome him or talk even a single word to him which was quite the reverse of the usual practice of Baba. Sorely distressed, Nana asked Baba the reason for such treatment. Baba said, he did not like to talk to persons who promised to remember lessons taught but failed to keep up the promise. Nana protested that he remembered and followed Baba's lessons.

Baba: "You, sir, avoid seeing "Sircar" (i.e., God Datta) and take a devious route. Why? Because the saint would ask you for the Rs. 300. Is this the way to remember my lessons? If you could not get the money, you could go and tell him so. Would he eat you, if you faced him? But what device is this, getting away from seeing God Datta on your way and going by an indirect route? And have not thorns got into you and your friend? How am I to talk with such a person?" Nana repented his mistake and promised to amend his ways in the future.

Duty to respect holy objects en route: The sastras declare that one should circumambulate and worship images, cows, if they adjoin one's route. Nana Saheb thus usually worshipped the holy image of Datta on the banks of the Godavari at Kopergaon on his way to Shirdi. Once when he was taking his brother-in-law to Shirdi, he dissuaded the latter from going to that temple to avoid loss of time. When they reached Shirdi, Baba was very angry.

With Beggars :

On another occasion, Baba gave Nana another lesson.

Baba: "Nana, if anyone comes and begs for anything, give as much as you can or care to give. If that person be not satisfied and ask for more, refuse it courteously. Do not flare into a passion or parade ail your official authority".

Nana promised to follow the advice as it seemed very easy. Some six months after this advice was given, Nana Saheb was at his own house at Kalyan, upstairs. A beggar woman came to that house and was pestering Mrs. Nana Saheb with repeated requests for more and more of Bhajani (fried mixture of grains) Mrs. Nana had given half her stock and the beggar wanted the whole stock and refused to budge an inch, unless and until her demand was complied with. Mrs. Nana lost all patience, sent for her husband and told him the facts. Nana Saheb grew angry and calling out for a peon, told the beggar "If you do not quickly receive what is given and go away, the peon will neck you out of the house".

Knew It All:

When next Nana visited Baba, the latter would not talk to him. Nana wondered what the matter was and finally asked Baba the reason for the chill reception.

Baba "How can I talk to one who does not care for the advice I have given?"

Nana: "Baba, what lesson have I forgotten?"

Baba : "That day when the beggar was importuning you for Bhajani, why did you call your peon to expel her and why did you show all your official hauteur? What did it matter if she stayed some time longer with her prayers for more? If you gently refused, she would have ultimately left quietly. Why call for a peon to expel her bodily?"

Nana recalled the event and recognised how the previous advice exactly applied to that event. He repented and resolved to amend.

XVII. SRI SAI BABA AND THE GEETA A SURPRISING EXPOSITION

Though a great Saint, Sri Sai Baba was generally believed to be unacquainted with Hindu Sastras until he one day began to give an exposition of the Gita.

Nana Saheb had studied *Bhagavad Gita* along with several Sanskrit commentaries including Sri Sankaracharya's. He piqued himself on his grasp of the Gita. One day as he was massaging Baba's feet at the Shirdi mosque, he was muttering something.

Baba : Nana, what are you muttering? Nana : A sloka in Sanskrit.

Baba : What *sloka*?

Nana : From the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Baba: Utter it audibly.

Nana then recited Bhagavad Gita Chapter IV , 34, *i.e., Thadviditihi, Pmripatena etc.*

Baba : Nana, do you understand? Nana : Yes.

Baba : Then tell me.

Nana: It means "By making prostration at full length, by questioning the Guru and rendering service, learn what this *Jnanais*. Then the *Jnanis* who have realised the Real or *Sadvastu* will give you instruction in *Jnana*".

Baba: Nana, I do not want the general purport. Explain it word by word, with strict reference to grammar.

Then- Nana gave such an explanation.

Baba: Is it enough that the prostration should be "full Length." or *Sahtanga*?

Nana: I cannot see what more is implied in the word "*Pranipriha*".

Baba : What is *Pariprasna*? Questioning.

What is *Prasna*? Questioning.

Baba : Nana

Baba: If both words mean the same, was Vyasa off his head to use two unnecessary syllables, *viz, Pari*?

Nana: I cannot see what more it means.

Baba: By *Seva*, what is the service denoted?

Nana: The service we usually render.

Baba: Like massaging? Nothing more?

Nana: I do not see what further meaning the word *Seva-cao* have.

Baba : In the next line, you say *Jnana* is to be imparted to Arjuna by means of instruction. Was not Arjuna a *Jiva*?

Nana: Yes.

Baba : How then is *Jnana* to be imparted to that which is *Jnana* already?

Nana : I do not know.

Baba : Can you read an extra syllable in the second half of the stanza?

Nana: Yes.

Baba: How?

Nana : Read *a* before *Jnanam* by using an *Avagraha*.

Baba : Then what is the meaning?

Nana: None. Sri Sankaracharya's *Bashya* does not give such a reading.

Baba : What if? If the word *Ajnana* gives a better sense, is there any objection?

Nana: No. But I do not find how to deduce any sense with that word in it.

Baba: Well, you will. First can you say why Sri Krishna refers Arjuna to others to obtain light? Was not Krishna a *Jnani* and why did he not give him light.

Nana: I cannot say why.

Then Baba began to explain; and he quoted from *Jnaneswari* passages to explain his answers. The explanations may be briefly summed up thus:

1. Mere prostration is not enough. It must be accompanied by a thorough and complete surrender of oneself (body, mind and soul) and one's possessions.
2. Mere questioning is not sufficient. It must not be out of idle curiosity or with any improper motive or attitude e.g. to catch at mistake in the answer or to trap the Guru. The object must be pure desire to attain progress and liberation.
3. Seva is not any service. To be effective, there must be no lingering idea that one is free to yield service or refuse it. One must feel that one is not the master of one's body-which is the Guru's and exists merely to render Him service.
4. *Jnana* is Realisation, i.e.. *Sad Vastu* itself and cannot be imparted by *Upadesa* i.e., instruction. Everything except *Jnana* or *Sad Vastu* is *Ajnana* or Ignorance including the instruction given by the guru. It is, however, a species of *Ajnana* that removes all other ignorance and reveals to the self of the pupil that he is the Self and not a creature with limitations. The pupil is sunk in that sort of ignorance; and he is to be raised out of it by constantly rubbing instruction into him, (birth after birth, it may be) by numerous teachers. All these teachers, the earnest pupil views as God. The Guru *Jnani* is not distinct from Krishna, as He has expressly declared in the Gita. Krishna thus honours all teachers who are *Jnanis*.

Thereafter, Baba went on day after day teaching Gita to Nana Saheb. What a rare good fortune! Very soon thereafter, crowds began to flock to Baba. There was no more free and clear teaching. Baba thereafter taught in parable by symbology and indirect ways which, however, were very telling and never forgotten by those who caught their meaning.

XVIII. JEALOUSY EASIEST TO CONQUER

SAI BABA POINTS A MORAL

One day Sri Sai Baba asked Nana Saheb: "Of all the six internal enemies of man, which is the easiest to conquer?" Nana could not say which it was. Baba then pointed out that jealousy was the easiest to conquer. In the other passions, there is some question of gain or loss to a man, but when a man is afflicted with jealousy, he is getting no material gain nor avoiding material loss thereby. It is perverse inability to put up with some other man's good fortune. If another obtains something, that is due to his previous good works; and we ought to rejoice at it. In any case, he does not gain it at our expense and we do not suffer any loss or disadvantage. So by dwelling on these matters, jealousy must be the easiest to conquer. In such forceful terms, Baba impressed a lesson much needed in these days of competition.

Grasping is Loss :

Baba frequently drew the attention of his devotees to the wisdom and happiness of parting with goods due to another and the folly of retaining them. Acceptance of goods or services from others *gratis* takes away one's *Apurva* or stored up merit. Baba taught this to Nana in various ways.

XIX. REPAYMENT OF PAST DEBTS

There was a Muslim farmer who had to deepen his field with dynamite; but his application to the Collector for a licence was twice refused on the strength of the report of the local officers. The farmer in disgust came to Baba and begged his intervention to secure bare justice. Baba told him to wait till Nana Saheb came. When Nana Saheb arrived, Baba asked him to recommend the application to the Collector. Nana replied that there was no hope of a third

application being successful. Baba, however, told Nana that this time the Collector would grant the application, if Nana supported it.

For Repayment :

Baba added : This applicant has left a box with us and he wants it to be returned to him. It is not right to say to him "Na". The words were cryptic, but Nana's constant association with Baba enabled him to interpret them aright. The applicant had, in some former birth, done a good deed or helped Baba (and perhaps Nana also) by a good turn, and so had to get a return for it. So Baba, through Nana, must now use his influence to turn the Collector's mind so as to see the justice of the applicant's claim.

Nana took the applicant to the Collector, and his third petition was presented. Nana was careful enough to state this previous orders. When the Collector asked the applicant why he insisted on having dynamite, the latter forcibly put his own case. The Government itself had issued a loan of Rs. 500/- for improvement of that land. Unless the well was deepened with dynamite, improvement of the land and return of the Government loan were not possible. The application was at once granted.

XX. FLIES AND ANTS AS GOOD AS MEN

GUESTS FOR THE DEVOUT

Nana Saheb was very orthodox and pious. He daily offered the *Vaiswadeva* sacrifice (i.e., cooked lice) to the domestic fire and went out to see if any guest (*Athithi*) was available to partake of the food. This is enjoined on the householder by Scripture. Nana Saheb never found any guest coming to him at such times.

Could the Scripture enjoin such a useless duty as to go out and look for guests - when none in fact came? He went one day to Baba hoping to ask him about it. But before he opened his mouth Baba taunted him with the words "Yes, the Guests? The devil, they will come to you". Nana understood that Baba was trying to solve his difficulty as to whether Vedas could prescribe a futile observance. Baba retorted that the scripture were not fatuous nor faulty, and that the fault was in the narrow interpretation of Nana.

He asked Nana why he took the word *Athithi* to mean" a human being, 3 cubits high, with a pair of arms and a Brahmin at that. Thousands of hungry guests were daily passing his way at the time of his *Vaiswadeva* offerings but he took no note of them. They were the ants, flies, crows, dogs, cats cattle and other creatures that were ever ready and constantly approaching him to satisfy their hunger. So Baba's advice was to take the cooked food and leave it at any place outside his house and all guests would gladly partake of the same, at their own time and God would be pleased with the sacrifice.

A Sudden Demand :

One day Nana arrived at Shirdi about 12 noon, without any cook or family. Baba told him "Prepare *pooran poli* (*Poli* - a flat cake made of lentil, coconut, wheat and sugar), I would like to taste it. Nana objected that the hour was late and that he had none to cook. Baba persisted and so Nana felt sure that some Brahmin would be available in the village to prepare that and other dishes. He took these to Baba at the mosque and requested him to taste them. Without touching them, Baba said, -'Good, Take back the plates'. Nana Saheb was dissatisfied and said, "How is it you ask me to take back the plates without even touching them? If you did not want to eat anything, why ask me to prepare? Unless you partake of something, I will not take away the plates nor eat anything myself".

Baba : I have eaten the poli. Go and take the plates away and have your meal.

Nana : You took the poli! When ? What was brought on the plates remains just as it was. Unless you eat I will not.

Won't Budge :

Saying so Nana felt chagrined and went away to the *chavadi*, leaving the plates behind. Baba's heart could not endure his 'children' starving and he sent for Nana and bade him to take the food saying, "Some time (back) I have taken your poli. Do not be obstinate. Take the plates away and have your breakfast.

Nana: "No. Not unless you take a bit at least". Nana went back to the *chavadi*.

Baba sent for him a second time and said in a tone of irritation: "What Nana! You have been with me these 18 years, and is this all your appraisal of me? Does

'Baba' denote to you only this Three-and-a-half cubits body and nothing more?
Hallo!

Where the ant eats, there eat I. Where the fly sips, there sip I.

I take any form I like and eat with any form. I have eaten your poli long ago. Do not be unreasonably obstinate".

Moral Stressed :

Nana saw that the logic of Baba was unanswerable. Baba was God in his view, and therefore immanent in all creatures including the flies and ants that settled on the polis as he presented it to Baba. Yet that faith was a weak watery faith that did not support fuller action on its basis'

Nana: Even though you say this, I realise nothing What am I to do?

Baba then made Nana's faith glow, by revelation of his All-Knowingness. There was some secret of Nana, which he never expected any outsider to know. But Baba made a gesture revealing his knowledge of that secret also Nana was convinced thereby that Baba was residing in his heart of all, watching everything; and as Nana gladly took away the plates, Baba told him: "As you see this sign that I make, you will see that I can take food (through other mouths)". This helped Nana better to realise the teaching, "He who sees me within all creatures and is thus devoted to me as the one, the centre, dwells in me, whatever he might be doing".

XXI DIVINITY IN ALL LIFE IMMANENCE

The question is often asked especially by people outside Maharashtra, whether Baba attained the highest Realisation himself and imparted it to his devotees. As for the first part of the question, there can be no hesitation in giving an affirmative answer. The loftiest realisation that any achieved must be obviously perceived and enjoyed by one whose nature and powers surpass our capacity to describe or comprehend. A fuller answer to the above question involves an intricate examination of subtle matter which would be uninteresting-nay, positively wearisome-to the genera] reader and has therefore been left over. It is enough here to say that if any creatures or beings had the intellectual

perception and the emotional or spiritual enjoyment conveyed by the terms God-Realisation and Self-Realisation, Sai who had gone through the necessary *sadhanas* and obtained his guru's grace, and who read every one's mind and heart and shared the ideas, sorrows and bliss therein certainly realised God and His Self and enjoyed Divine Bliss.

The General Demand :

Referring to the second half of the question, we shall content ourselves here with the statement that the thousands that went to Sri Sai Baba and still go, have not cared for the loftiest realisation and never asked for it. Baba knew, if anyone knew, that removal of immediate troubles was almost invariably the heart's desire of his visitors and devotees and that the better sort among them wanted Devotion, and other virtues, vision of God, *Sadgati* and other spiritual good of the same order and he has showered these liberally on his devotees.

God Guru is All :

In not a few casts, he gave his ardent devotees certain interim experiences of Realisation that would naturally lead on to the highest. Among these is the power to see the Guru-and that means the same thing as God to most of his devotees in all creatures and at all places. They viewed him, at least in their moments of exalted devotion, as God; and when they saw their God Guru in various creatures, there was a more intense and vivid realisation of the intellectually accepted truth that God is in all. *Jñaneswari*, a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita* in Marathi ranked very high in the Maha-rastra,. describes the seeing of God in all creatures as an important, nay, indispensable part of the aspirant's course. Hence Baba helped many to attain that step especially through the identification of God with the Guru. Nana Saheb realising his Guru-God's presence in flies, ants, etc., is a good instance of this help.

XXII. SAI BABA'S FIRST RISE TO FAME AS SANTANAKARAKA

Loka Bhinnaruchih, i.e., "Tastes differ" is an ancient saying which applies in the field of religion at least as much as in other fields. To some, God is too grand a Being or too much of an ideal or too abstract to meddle with the

humdrum of our daily life especially with such trifles as getting bridegrooms, or children. To others, God is preeminently the power that blesses them in all their efforts and affair and secures for them highly prized objects like the above, proving therein His Omnipotence, Omniscience and unfathomable kindness and love. Each set receives a benefit in accordance with its own views. No writer on religion can afford to overlook the existence of either set. The vast majority, nay, almost the entire rank and file of the devotees of Sri Sai Baba that this writer has come across belong: to the second class and have given him an account of their experiences of Sai's power and kindness exercised, in such cases. Hundreds, nay, thousands of other people of like view exist outside this circle, who are at present ignorant of Sri Sai Baba's vast powers and beneficence towards devotees and who will welcome a brief reference to and appraisal of such experience. In any case without such, reference, no account of Sri Sai Baba will be complete.

The First Gift :

In the early history of Baba, if any extraordinary powers of his mote than an other contributed largely to the spread of his name and influence among the cultured' and; English-educated classes, it was his blessings for issue. Gopal Rao Gundu, a Revenue Inspector, living with two wives- had no issue. Baba blessed him saying that Allah would give him children, and he got issue. The inspector had many friends and acquaintances among officials and other educated and influential people and to these he gave a glowing account of Sri Sai Baba's powers and kindness. Thence forward officials great and small paid reverential visits to Shirdi, several of them in the hope of being benefited by this "Samartha" (i.e., person endowed with superhuman power, to achieve practically everything he likes) in their domestic and other temporal concerns; and others followed their examples. It is neither possible nor necessary to catalogue those who obtained progeny or other benefits by Sai's grace. Here we may just notice a few in whose case there is any special and noteworthy feature not found in other cases.

The Grateful Official :

The Revenue Inspector, in his gratitude, brought a quantity of stones to rebuild Baba's dilapidated mosque. But evidently reserving the merit of rebuilding it to others, Baba distributed the stones among local Hindu temples for their use. G. Gundu was keen on starting a grand annual fair at Shirdi on *Ram Navami* day in honour of Baba; and with the help of others this was started in 1895 and is still kept up.

Just about this time a bangle merchant of Ahmednagar Sri Damodar Savalraai Rasane (whom Baba used to call Damia) came to Baba. Living with two wives, he was blessed with no issue. With great faith, he approached Baba (and was prominent among the devotees by his services in connection with the *Ramanavami* fair). The manner in which Baba blessed him bears a striking resemblance to the blessings received by King Dasaratha after securing the help of a great rishi Rishyasringa and performing a grand *Puthrakameshti* sacrifice^

Four Filched Away :

Baba used to receive or even buy mangoes by dozens or even by the basket. These he would distribute freely to all. One day in 1895, he had disposed of a good quantity, and kept apart 8 mangoes. The voracious boys that clustered around him asked Baba to distribute these also. "No, they are for Damia", he said. "But Damia is not here" insisted the boy. "He is not, but he is at Kopergaon now on his way here", Baba replied (though none knew or had reason to expect Damia's coming) and declined to give the fruits away. But when Baba was out or was attending to some other matters, these "naughty children" of his filched four of these fruits. And thereafter Damia arrived Baba received him cordially saying that he had reserved mangoes for him. He presented the remaining four fruits saying "Eat these and die". Damia was shocked. Mahlsapathy, an ardent devotee of Baba, explained to Damia that it was a blessing to die at the sacred feet of a saint. Baba, however, put an end to his grim humour and thus addressed him, "Damia, do not eat these fruits yourself. But give them to your wife, i.e., the junior wife and she will bear you children. The first, a son, you should name Daulat Shah, the second, a son, Nana Shah". Damia took the fruits, and his junior wife ate them. Twelve months later, she brought forth one son, and

another in a further period of eighteen months. She begot exactly eight children of whom four were filched away by the hand of Death. Four sons survived including Saheb Rasane or Daulat Shah, who was an active trustee of Sri Sai Baba's Sansthan.

An Open Guarantee :

Another striking and well-known instance is the case of Rao Bahadur H. V. Sathe, retired Deputy Collector, Poona. Mr. Sathe was left widower about 1900, with one or two daughters, but no sons. Pressed constantly to marry again, he declared that there was no great probability of his obtaining male issue, that a marriage late in life was a serious matter and that he would wed only if assured by a great saint (Sat Purusha) that a marriage would give male issue and be beneficial. In 1904 at the age of 49, he was posted to Ahmednagar District, and he visited Shirdi. Then as he was leaving Baba, the local Mamlatdar told Baba "Baba, Saheb (i.e. H. V. S.) has no son". Baba replied "If he marries, God (Allah) will give him a son". Mr. H. V. S., thus assured, married his second wife, the very next year. During the next 7 years two children were born of this marriage, but both proved to be daughters. His father-in-law, Dada Kelkar went to Baba and complained of absence of male issue, for which every member of the family was hoping and praying. Baba replied, "Wait, Allah will bless. I am praying to Allah". The next year a son was born who is now the prop of his father in his green old age.

XXIII. SRI SAI BABA'S GIFT WITH TEARS

A CHILD PRODIGY

When applicants for *Santana* became numerous, Sri Sai Baba adopted a peculiar procedure in conferring this blessing. Every lady longing for issue brought with her an entire coconut and presented it to Baba. If Baba re-presented the coconut to her-and she would usually receive it in one end of her flowing upper cloth-she would beget a child in about a year's time. If the coconut was other wise disposed of, that would signify that a blessing was refused.

Mr. Santaram Balwant Nachne went with his wife to Baba about 1918. The children born till them of this wife died at a very tender age. In taking the coconut

from lady and representing it to her, Baba showed strange agitation. His eyes brimmed with tears as he dropped the coconut into the end of her robe.

Yogi at Five :

In a year's time, she gave birth to a son. This was a matter for great rejoicing, though the joy was very much damped by the child being born under the constellation *Moola*-which forebodes evil to the parents. The mother died eighteen months thereafter. That might be one reason why Baba was shedding tears as he gave her the blessing. Anyhow the child (born after Baba's samadhi) was named Kalu Ram, and he proved an infant phenomenon. Before he was five, he would sit up in a corner during the stillness of the dawn, cover his face, and with eyeballs upturned, practise Yoga Samadhi. He would constantly repeat 'Ram Hari Ram' and write the same sacred name on slips of paper, and he did it a lakh of times or more. Worship of Sri Sai Baba's portrait at home with hymns (arati), etc., listening to holy works, e.g., *Hari Vijaya, ftc.*, were the other tasks he set himself to; and he would narrate how Sri Krishna appeared before him and played with him.

INSTRUCTIONS TO FATHER

Eminent people like Sri Gadgi Baba came to see him. One day, he called his father and admonished him about the need for concentration on Baba. Taking up the well-known picture "His Master's Voice", Kalu Ram said;

Kalu: What is this?

S. B. Nachne : It is the advertisement of a phonograph.

Kalu : It is a special message of Krishna.

S. B. Nachne : What is the special message?

Kalu : What is the dog tearing?

S B. Nachne : The music played by the plate.

Kalu: The dog hears his Master's voice. See the dog-so steady from head to tail, listening so attentively! We must be equally firm and steady. See how it sits. You also should sit like this and listen, and then you will hear Baba's voice!

S. B. Nachne : How do you know Baba's voice?

Kalu : I know I will not tell you. Experience it yourself. The Last Days :

In 1926, this prodigy passed away. Even though he had dropsy and fever he kept cheerful to the last. Taking a locket with Baba's picture from his breast, he gave it to his father saying that he had no more use for it, as he was going away. Later, he called for *Jnaneswari* (a very erudite commentary on *Gita*, found in many parts to be above the level of the ordinary graduate) and asked his father to read it. The father was choking with grief at the approaching end. Kalu, however, told him that none need grieve at such parting and asked him to read out the 13th chapter. The father could not. The son kept the book in front of himself. After doing arati to Baba and singing hymns, the boy passed away in peace. The slips he had written holy names, on Upasani Baba took away as a memento. Such early death for such a holy life must have been foreseen by Sri Sai Baba and formed an additional reason for his tears.

XXIV. GAVE SON FROM HIS OWN BODY SRI SAI BABA'S REBUKE

We shall close this *Santmakareka* aspect of Sri Sai Baba's life with two more instances.

A lady from Sholapur had lived with her husband, Sikharam Aurangabadkar, for 27 years and never conceived even once. She came to Shirdi and requested Madhav Rao Deshpande, the familiar attendant on Baba to intercede with him to give her his blessing to "shake off the sterile curse". Madhav Rao waited for an opportunity when Baba would be in a highly pleased mood. One day after dinner, as Madhav Rao washed Baba's food-soiled hand, the latter pinched his cheek. M. at once feigned anger and said :

M : Baba! Is it proper for you to pinch me?

Baba : Arre! Shama! During the 72 generations that you were with me I never pinched you till now and yet you resent my touching you!

M : Baba, we want a God to give us only *good and sweet* things, Paradise, etc.

Baba : Yes, *Indeed, I have come for that purpose*, Loose and rolling :

Baba took his seat. Seeing him in such a pleased mood' M. introduced the lady to him and she gave Baba a coconut and scented sticks.

M: Baba, this lady has no issue. Bless her and give her the coconut.

Baba took up the coconut and shook it. It was dry. The kernel was loose and rolling inside.

B : Shama! This is rolling. She what it says.

M : The woman prays that a child should be similarly quickening and rolling within her womb. Pray bless her and give her the coconut.

B: Will the coconut (if given to her) turn into a baby? How silly of people to fancy such things!

M: Nevermind. I know the virtue of the gift. Give her the coconut.

B : Shama, break the coconut, M : No. Give it to her entire.

The parley went on for a while, Baba repeatedly ordering the breaking, and Madhav Rao pleading for the gift entire. Finally Baba yielded and gave her the coconut and said : "She will have issue in 12 months". And she had it within twelve months,

Delay in a Vow :

One Narayan Govind Scindbe of Harda had seven daughters but no &on. He went to the Datta Temple at Gangapur and vowed that if he should be blessed with a son in the course of one year, he would bring over the child to Datta's feet. A son was born to him and that within the prescribed one year. He delayed fulfilment of his vow from year to year. In 1911, i.e., after seven years of such delay, he came before Baba, who took him to task in rather remarkable language.

Baba looked fiercely at Scindhe and said: What! Are you puffed up? Where was there any male issue in your destined lot? I have given you a son, extracting a son from this body".

Not a Miracle:

Here Sri Sai Baba pointed to his own body. What is one to infer from it? That the male issue of Scindhe was the direct result of Datta's blessing in answer to his prayer; that Sri Sai Baba being one with God or Datta, answered the prayer addressed expressly to God Datta; and that though certain predestined conditions in Scindhe's life made no provision for male issue, still Sai through his

superhuman powers took out of his own destined (future) lot, a son and transferred that blessing or gift to Scindhe!

What becomes of the earlier answer by Baba to Nana Saheb, that the promise of children was only astrological reading and not a miracle? Are the two statements inconsistent or are they reconcilable. The reader may think it out or wait for an answer.

Rebirth of a Pet :

Before concluding, it may be mentioned that presentation of a coconut was not always necessary to secure Baba's blessings for issue. When Mrs. Chotubai, the wife of Rao Bahadur M. W. Pradhan (accompanied by her sister-in-law who was believed to be *enciante*), went to Baba, the latter pointing to Mrs. C. said "This to be the mother of Babu".

Babu was a young man of Shirdi much loved and petted by Baba and had recently died.

One of those present fancied that Baba's pointing was a mistake and asked him pointing to other lady "This is the lady, Baba, is not? ' "No" said Baba, once again pointing to Mrs. Chotubai, "This is to be the mother of my Babu".

Mrs. Chotubai who was not at that time pregnant was soon in the family way and in a year's time begot a *son*, whom Baba recognised as his own Babu which was consequently given to the child.

XXV. DESERVE IT AND YOU WILL HAVE IT ADHIKARI WHO? COURSE AND SURRENDER

Once a rich man went to Sri Baba and asked him for *Brahmajnan*. "Show me God i.e., Brahman, Baba. I have come a long distance to see you, as people report that you reveal Brahman very quickly".

Baba: Oh, Do not fear. I shall show you Brahman at once, and that very clearly. Numerous are the seekers after wealth, power, honour, health, but seekers after Brahman are rare

Baba then spoke a few words about Brahman being the root cause of the Universe, about the necessity for realising it to escape rebirth, about the need of

a Guru, etc. Then he turned to a boy and told him: "Five rupees I urgently require. Go to Marwadi Nandlal and ask him for a band loan of Rs. 5".

The boy returned and reported that the Marwadi was absent. Baba again sent him to other rich villagers with the same result. This took about 15 or 20 minutes. Meanwhile the rich questioner was getting impatient that he was not taught further and shown Brahman. He could avoid the wastage of further time; but he doubted if he advanced the Rs. 5 loan himself whether there was much hope of recovering it from Baba. He had besides, engaged a *tonga* to and from Shirdi and he was afraid that the *tonga* man would press him to start quickly.

Not Grasped :

So, impatient of delay he asked Baba : "Baba, will you help me to grasp Brahman?"

Baba: What I have been doing all this while is just for that purpose to make you see God even now while you are seated here. Have you not grasped anything?

Visitor: No, Baba.

Baba ; I want to get at 5 rupees. / *want five things surrendered* (a) The five Pranas - life forces, (b) The five senses, (c) Mind, (d) intellect and (e) Ego. The road to Brahman is hard to tread. All cannot tread it. There must be no clogs of attachment to wealth, honour or position. In that case, light will dawn.

Baba pointed out that the man had Rs. 250 in his pocket ready with him and yet he would not part with Rs. 5 to help a guru from whom he wanted the invaluable Brahman as a free gift.

Another Demand :

Baba was similarly pressed to impart *Brahmajnan* by a man who had made no attempt to lessen his love of the world and its enjoyments. Baba told him to wait and then sent a messenger to a Marwadi for a loan of a good sum, say Rs. 200, The Marwadi sent a reply that the money was not available. The messenger was sent to other well-to-do residents of the village, equally infructuously. Finally, he sent word to Nana Saheb G. Chandorkar and asked him for that amount. N. G. Chandorkar then sent a chit to the first mentioned Marwadi for the identical amount as a loan and the money was immediately forthcoming.

Meanwhile Baba's questioner who could not see why Baba was putting off his request for illumination, asked him again to enable to realise Brahman. Baba replied that it was just for that purpose he had been busy all the time trying to borrow the sum.

"You see", said Baba, "it is just like this in the world". When Baba wanted money from the Marwadi, it is not to be bad. When Nana tried, he got it at once. It is *only those who are fit to receive It, that will receive It*".

XVI. GIFTS OF SRI SAI BABA

MOST VARIED AND UNIQUE PEARLS AND SWANS

Newton's dog, his fellowmen and Newton all looked at Nature and saw apples fall. The first looked on and derived no benefit. The second ran up and ate the fruits. Newton alone discovered the Law of Gravitation which has served mankind, as a useful theory or hypothesis to explain many facts of Nature.

All sorts of men and women have approached Sri Sai Baba. Some have returned without any benefit. Some received much of temporal goods with just a taste of the spiritual; others, higher and higher spiritual goods. Every one received what he was fitted to receive. Baba, the Universal mother that he was, impartially offered his gifts, nay, scattered them before his visitors, but the crows picked up the offal and the swans, the pearls.

It was in accordance with the capacity, the receptivity and the circumstances of each visitor due to his *Karma Rinanubanda, i.e.,* prenatal merits and ties, that Baba's gifts were effective; and hence spiritual benefits received from him are of a very varied description. Anything like an exhaustive statement of them being impossible, we may content ourselves here with a set or samples.

That Boundless Love :

When people talk of God, to most He is a word and nothing more. They know how to use it for their worldly purposes, nothing what effect it has on the hearer. Convention and current feeling invests its use with a certain dignity and telling force, specially in oaths and curses. But how few have felt at all or in any appreciable degree the sacred awe, the first basis of the idea of the Holy or that for higher feeling of all-Consuming all-sacrificing boundless Love! For too many

have been begotten or brought up in godless families amidst cheerless, cramped and darkened surroundings where the words and conduct of the parents, relations and friends are really a stifling negation of God, conscience and the moral principal, sometimes nominally veiled by an occasional observance of forms of worship or reference to God. Some of these are at times candid enough to admit and sometimes to bemoan the fact that they could never conceive of, much less experience God in their lives.

Spiritual Rebirth, First step in God-Realisation :

The greatest service Sri Sai rendered and renders to mankind is to save such souls from their utter darkness, to show them the existence in himself and elsewhere, of vast power, vast knowledge, vast goodness-and self-forgetting Love which blesses him that gives and him that receives and to make them float on waves of joy and happiness, hitherto unexperienced. Rudely shaken from or terrified out of their prolonged stupor and indifference they just receive a few gleams of light into their sinsoiled eyes, feel a glow of gratitude, love and other noble emotions in their chilled hearts, begin their spiritual birth and see or feel their God in Sai, their real Saviour. For the first time, they get a rudimentary idea of Sri Sai-and know God. He is the giver of the God-idea to them and is God, in their view and it may be their only God.

The benefit is by no means confined to the class just described. Persons, who start life better, fall into evil ways, gets tainted by wicked company, sunk in vice and sin from drama and cinema songs and street talk, lose their early innocence and receptivity, become thoroughly care-hardened, sneer at purity and piety and blatantly proclaim their imperviousness to godly influence. To such Sai has many times restored, in some degree, their lost innocence by making them feel that they see God in him and in his devotees. Some cultured and English educated persons that this writer met have confessed to him that Baba, who has restored their faiths, is God to them, that in their present life of holiness the foreground is fully occupied by Baba, and that Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Sri Siva, Sri Datta and Sri Pandarinath get their hab of glory through Baba. One lady said

"Krishna no doubt appeals to *me* and attracts me. But Baba who often appears and instructs me in visions is a hundred times more powerful".

The need for a noble "Superman" that leads one to God is at its height in the case of advanced spiritual aspirants who style him their *Samartha Sadguru* and derive from him the maximum benefit that a human being can enjoy. Realisation of the « *Ishtadevata*, perpetual enjoyment of heaven at His feet, attainment of Adwaitic Bliss or *Nirvana Sukha* can alike be had at the guru's feet and there alone.

A Warning :

Sri Sai Baba showered his benefits on thousands in a variety of ways. Some only of these have been revealed to this writer; and these may be a sample of his gift to others. But one cannot be sure that the highest have been yet made public. However that may be, before proceeding to give a very brief sketch of these, the writer has one request to make or a warning to give. Person who are great admirers of particular saints, like Krishna Chaitanya, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Samartha Rarodas, Haranath or Thayumanavar, should not judge others exclusively by the life, teachings and methods of their saint or hero. Let not Sri Sai Baba be measured on the *Procrustes bed* of any particular saint. Sri Sai is a rare phenomenon by himself and his services to Humanity, if judged calmly, would be found great enough to require a special corner in our pantheon and a readjustment of our ideas based wholly on a few past examples. In the words of Browning (as adapted) we must insist,

Our times are in his hand,

Who saith "A whole I planned,

Past shows but half; Trust God, see all, nor be afraid"

Add this to the rest,

Take it and try its worth.

XXVII. SRI SAI BABA'S TOUCH EXPERIENCES OF A SANYASIN

Sri Narayan Asram of Vaman Mutt Gangapuri, Wai is a cultured sanyasi who says that a considerable and momentous advance in his spiritual condition

was due to Sri Sai Baba". While serving in the Customs Department in 1910, he approached Baba. But within a few years, Baba noted that he was after higher things than worldly welfare and "graciously conveyed" to him without any words, the feeling that differences between souls, nay all differences, were unreal, that the one Real Thing is that which underlies all. Baba did not speak out and express this in words. In fact Baba spoke to him very little.

Baba's influence, he says was mostly silent. Baba's touch was a potent factor in moulding those who came to him- "Baba had a way of touching (with his palm) the head of the devotee who went to him. His touch conveyed certain impulses, forces, ideas etc. Sometimes he pressed his hand heavily on the head, as though he was crushing out some of the lower impulses of the devotee. Sometimes he tapped, sometimes he made a pass with the palm over the head etc. Each had its own effect-making remarkable difference in the sensations or feelings of the devotee".

The Spiritual Push :

"Baba's touch was one means. Apart from that he would invisibly operate on the nature of the devotee and effect a great change in him". For this, immediate proximity was not necessary, Sri N. Asram (then Mr. Toser) would go and sit even there, he was under Baba's direct influence.

Unfortunately, almost the whole lot that went to Baba wanted worldly benefit and had only poor, if any spiritual ambition. Hardly any was competent to receive the highest teachings. He evidently found none to receive all that he could confer, and so none has succeeded to his position at Shirdi.

In the case of Sri Narayan Asram, Baba gave the first great push in Pararaartha about 1914 and left him in charge of the departed, yet living soul of Vasudevananda Saraswati (as all great souls are one) who is responsible for his present condition.

"Baba was pre eminently practical", says Sri N. A«ram. "He just gave people a push to carry thtmafew steps beyond the level at the time of approaching him". Others will be there at the exact psychological moment to give the needed help and guidance at each level and stage.

XXVIII. SPIRITUAL GAINS AND WORLDLY HELP IS IT OBJECTIONABLE?

Some who learnt of Baba's miraculous help to his devotees have been oppressed by doubts and objections. What trivial work is done by the saint! If he be a great saint, could he or should he attend to such trifles, or to any worldly work at all? If not exactly *infra dignitatem*, does it not prove that he is not a Jnani in *Sat Chit-Ananda*, i.e., perpetual absorption in Supreme Bliss of God or the Atman? Can an *Atmanishta* or *Jivan Mukta* afford to fritter away his moments in concern for worldly gains and losses, comforts and discomforts, even though they are not his but others. Have not saints themselves decried the working of miracles, and is not such working *prima facie* proof of the absence of *Jnana* or Realisation?

A close examination of these objection is not possible here. But a single circumstance that constitute a complete reply may now be mentioned. Is not a fact that Sri Krishna, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sri Sankaracharya, Lord Gauranga and a host of other 'Great Ones' have rendered temporal help, even in small matters, to many even by miracles. Are these to be labelled *Ajnanis*?

Not His: But God's :

What applies to them applies to Baba. The reader will find the truth declared often by Baba that what are called 'his' actions are really 'His'. Baba repeatedly stated that he did nothing, that God did everything, that God is the Master (Allah Malik), and that he, Baba. performed no miracles and indeed did not do anything unless permitted or made to do it. Ample proof will be found even in these pages of his complete self-surrender, his merger in or identification with God. Meanwhile the reader is requested, in the words of Baba, to have faith and patience (*Nishta* and *SaburiJ*, to wait and ice. He will soon find that the apparently trivial is at times an important link in momentous affairs, that Baba's 'worldly' works In unworldly, that his efforts and care are consistent with-nay the expressions of his supreme love and bliss.

Baba's care for children began even before they were born. The devotees that successfully prayed to Baba for securing matches for their daughters and

progeny have urged their prayers on all occasions, great and small. Pregnancy is sometimes the occasion of great anxiety and Baba has not failed to help his devotees in such critical moments. Here is a typical instance.

Presence Unnecessary:

The daughter-in-law of Nana Saheb Nimonkar, an Hon. Magistrate of Nimon, was in the family way and in September-October, 1916, her accouchement was expected Mr & Mrs. N. Nimonkar started for Poona to help in the accouchement and called *enroute* at Shirdi. When they wanted leave to go to Poona, Baba refused. He told N. N. on the other hand that the latter should stay by Baba's side, bury him and then leave Shirdi. Asked about the accouchement, Baba replied, "Why are you anxious? God will help". That meant of course that Baba undertook the safe delivery of the child and that Nimonkars stayed on.

At Poona, no preparations for helping the lady were made and when the pains began, she was taken about 10 p.m. to a hospital and there within an hour, in the total absence of help when even the attendant nurse was absent, a male child was born in good health. At about that time, Baba told Nana Saheb Nimonkar at Shirdi, "There was woman. She was taken to a place. There she was delivered safe-of a male child". Here again as promised, God did help—through Baba of course.

**XXIX. SRI SAI BABA'S HELP
IN ALL STAGES**

Sri Sai Baba's care for his devotees and their families and their number is legion-extended and still extends from the cradle to the grave, from one end of the country to the other, from sunrise, and from the most trivial to the most momentous of their affairs. A few grains are generally taken out of a boiling pot to see if the whole is boiled. A very few reported instances given hereunder will similarly serve to show the excellent help Baba has rendered in innumerable unreported cases. Baba has proclaimed such help in general terms to all devotees and in some cases avowed or alluded to the particular relief given. We shall select a few of to the latter class.

Mr. Somanath Shankar Deshpande, (C.I.D. Inspector at Poona), son of Nana Saheb Nimonkar, relates that in December 1917 he started to go to Nimon, his ancestral home where his brother's wife had been recently delivered of a child. *Enroute*, he called at Shirdi and paid his respect to Baba. In sending him away, Baba gave him *udhi* as usual, but added the significant words "*Porala Jiva Love*" i.e., "Save the child". Mr. Somnath taking this to refer to his own healthy three years boy travelling with him, gave him the *udhi* and left for Nimon. Soon after he reached that place, his brother's new born baby was found to be in *extremis*; and all hope of its life was given up. Then it struck him that Baba's parting words referred to this child and he looked for the *udhi*. But it was not to be found. Then taking the baby on his own lap, he intently prayed to Baba. In 15 minutes, the child began to revive and was at last restored to health. How kind of Baba to think of a devotee's child some 30 miles away from Shirdi and to take steps to save its life.

Had Sitaram Dixit, a well-known solicitor of Bombay and an ex. M.L.C., gave up all his public and professional activities and surrendered himself entirely to Baba, and made Shirdi his own abode. One morning when he bowed at Baba's feet at the mosque, the later told him "*Arre Kakn tula kalji Kasuli? Sagoli Kalji Mala ahe*" i.e., Why should you have any anxiety or care? All the responsibility is mine. Mr. Dixit felt that Baba was extending his all-powerful wings to protect him and his, and expressed assent saying, "True, Baba. All care is yours". He had no inkling then that there was any particular incident or circumstance which called for Baba's help at that time. But going to Ville Parle, his own home, soon after, he discovered what took place on the very day that Baba spoke to him the above words. His little daughter was playing in the ball. In a corner was an almyrah with glass shutters. That fell upon the child. Glass articles and metallic toys were inside the cupboard. But what was the result of that fall? All these articles appeared to have been lifted up and placed by the side of the child. Nothing hurt her. She merely broke her own glass bangles and had a slight scratch in consequence!

XXX. TRANSFORMS A PRIESTLY BIGOT

SRI SAI BABA'S CARE FOR CHILDREN

Babu, the little pet of Sri Sai Baba whose rebirth as the son of Rao Bahadur M. W. Pradhan has already been described, was the instrument for the conversion of an orthodox Telugu priest, who had been carrying on extensive *pooja's* etc. for the benefit to the Pradhan family. When Babu once fell ill, the priest took the view that the sickness was due to the family worship of Baba, (whom he took to be) a Muslim neglecting Datta*. One night when the child was lying very ill upstairs, his mother thought of sending for the priest. Meanwhile the priest himself climbed upstairs and mentioned a remarkable vision. He saw a figure, like that of Sri Sai Baba, sitting on top of the staircase, holding a baton in one hand. That figure told him "What do you mean? I am the Lord of this house". The priest was so much influenced by the sight that he began to pray to Baba and said that in case the child should be able to swallow milk within five minutes and recover health from the next day, he would recognise Baba to be Datta, go to Shirdi and pay him a *dakshina* of Rs. 120. The child took milk within five minutes and began to play some hours later. The priest was converted into a devotee of Baba and fulfilled his vow.

A Timely Warning :

A child of Mr. Pradhan was getting occasional fits which caused considerable anxiety while they stayed. One night at 11 p.m. Mrs. Chotubai Pradhan was thus addressed by Baba in her sleep : "Are you sleeping? Get up. Your boy will have convulsions". At once she woke up with a start and looked at her boy. He was alright then. But Baba's kind warning should not be ignored. So she set about getting all the accessories needed for treatment of 'fits' ready, e.g., a charcoal fire, hot water, Eau-de-cologne, etc., and kept watch. At 2 a.m. the boy awoke with convulsion and all the family were roused. The presence of everything needed helped to combat the disease and in half an hour it passed off. How kind of Baba to give such timely warning of an impending danger!

Even in little matters Baba used his omniscience. *Ant-tir-jnana* as the Bombay devotees term it, for their benefit. Mrs. Chotubai was once worshipping Baba at the mosque. He suddenly stopped her and bade her go back to her

lodgings. Going there she found that her little baby was crying, and she put it to sleep and came back. "Now do your *pooja*" remarked Baba on her return to the masjid. What vast concern for a crying baby! The masjid was too far off from her lodgings to let her hear the baby's cries. But Baba heard all cries anywhere and he came to the rescue.

At Danger Points :

Baba's care was not confined to children born with a silver spoon in their mouth. There was a humble family of Babu Kirwanaikaf at Shirdi with a little daughter aged 3 and named Santi. She used to say that she was Baba's sister; Baba was fond of her. One day she slipped into a well and it might have proved fatal, as the neighbours thought. But going up to the well they found that the child was floating above water holding on to a ledge. "Baba held me up" said the child. There was no other explanation for her safe escape. The fall had not injured her in the least.

A child ran one day along a water-covered lane of Shirdi. By the side of the lane, a very deep trench had been cut for building the foundation of a house. The trench was full of storm water and was about 5 feet deep. The child walking in full dress with a cap and umbrella slipped into the trench, unnoticed by anyone but somehow it came out of the trench, without knowing even how to swim. "Baba showed me that there were steps to climb up and I walked up those steps" said the child.

XXXI. BABA'S HELP TO BOYS IN INFANCY

STRANGE ADVICE: BUT RIGHT

Sri Sai Baba had no school education. He never wrote or read anything written. He never even signed his name—if he had any name except the general name Sri Sai Baba i.e. Saintly Father which is applicable to any holy fakir. Yet he knew all about school and college studies and examinations and helped people to attain success in these. The first instance is mentioned by H. S. Dixit, Ex. M.L.C., in his notes about Sri Sai Baba published by him in Vols. I and II of *Sai Lila Masik*.

In 1913 when Mr. and Mrs. Dixit were living at Shirdi they sent a son of theirs for his education to stay at Bandra with a friend. About a month before the examination, the boy was seriously ill and Mr. Dixit was asked to go over and see the boy. Sri Sai Baba to whom the letter was shown, detained Mr. Dixit and wanted that the boy should be sent up to Shirdi. In spite of his illness, and near approach of the examinations and the unsuitability of that village for study or medical treatment, the boy was brought to Shirdi. There he soon regained his health. Yet, Baba did not send him back, not even on the date fixed for examination, viz., 2-11-1913. The Bandra friend was surprised at the detention. But the examination, he discovered, was postponed to 6-11-1913. That friend wrote again to get the boy in time for 6-11-1913. But Baba detained him once more having foreknowledge that it would be postponed further to 13-11-1913. Baba finally sent the boy in time to attend examination. Despite such long absence the boy passed the examination.

XXXII. AS IF TO STRIKE BUT REALLY TO BLISS

SRI SAI BABA'S WAY

There was oftentimes a certain mystery and dignity about Sri Sai Baba's direction or order when he favoured his devotees. He would not condescend to explain or give reasons. What was a real and great favour came with the harsh appearance of heartless cruelty. Thus when Mr. Manager of Poona had lost his employment and went to Shirdi in the hope that Baba would help him to get employed, Baba ordered him, at once, to start back to Poona *via* Ahmednagar, with Tatya Patel and others who were going there for fun and no business of their own. Mr. Manager's plea that he had no business at Ahmednagar or Poona was unheeded. But the benefit of implicit obedience to Baba's order was immediately felt. When he reached Poona, there was a strike of mill hands and the Directors were waiting for him, to take charge of the Managership. Baba lifts his hand as though to strike, but the uplifted hand showers blessings.

The Dakshina :

Once D. H. Lele, Inspector of Land Records, Nasik was going to Shirdi to see Baba. *Enroute*, at Kopergaon, he visited the Library and saw from the Official

Gazette that he had been promoted from Rs. 125 to Rs. 150. When he reached Shirdi and bowed at Baba's feet, the latter asked him for Rs. 15. Mr. Lele pleaded that he had not so much money with him. Baba retorted "It is only yesterday, I gave you Rs. 25. Go and fetch fifteen". The money was then borrowed from Mr. H. V. Sathe (to whom the facts were narrated) and paid to Baba.

Mr. Somanath Shankar Deihpande Nimonkar, Inspector of Police, Poona says that when he was a Sub-Inspector at Kopergaon, he visited Baba at Shirdi and the latter asked for a *dakshina* of Rs. 10. That was paid and it then seemed to have no particular significance. But about 6 months later, he got an order for increasing his salary by Rs. 10 *from the date of his paying that dakshina*.

XXXIII. THE MYSTIC BLISS OF BABA

Baba gave all things to his devotees and filled them with all sorts of joys—'enjoyment of worldly objects, comforts of domestic life riches, honour, success in one's efforts, security from danger, release from disease and troubles of various sorts. It is not to these joys that this article is devoted,— nor even to the joys he gave them of overcoming defects and vices. The new life of virtue and power, with the joyous sense of achievement not only increased the quantum but also the tone and scale of their happiness; lifting it from the animal level of selfish sense gratification to the angelic level of selfless spiritual joy, the joy of life that *is* grounded in love. But there are special grades of joy - including the "Mystic Bliss" that Baba favoured some devotees with; and it is that bliss that will be now described.

First it is necessary to define the term used. 'Mystic' is a very elastic, very popular, and therefore much abused, term—so much abused in fact as to deter some from using it in serious works. Such vagueness and the resulting confusion and abuse can, however, be easily avoided by starting with a definition and strictly adhering to it. This writer uses the word *Mysticism* to denote the blissful direct immediate contact by intuition, or attempt at such contact by any person, with the Real or what stands to him as the ultimate that lies beyond the universe of phenomena, subjective and objective.

This Real or Ultimate is God to most persons; and in their case, mystic bliss is the same as or a part of and preparation for perfect Divine Bliss. But even among religious minded people, the Real that the touch in such experience may not be distinctly identified with God. For instance, Tennyson even as a boy began to dive into himself, by pronouncing his own Christian name and ridding it of its finite association, with the result that he was lost in a trance, in which the consciousness of his little ego perished or rather expanded infinitely into an illimitable Light of Self, full of joy and life, wherein death was an unimaginable or laughable absurdity. This was clear mysticism of the self without distinct reference to a personal or impersonal God, though few would hesitate to give that name to the limitable Deathless state of enlightenment.

Joy Alone Left :

This mystic bliss comes to Buddhists in attaining "Nirvana", in "extinguishing" their little self; but as they do not recognise or ascribe their joy to God, such bliss cannot be described as Divine Bliss by them, though a student of religious psychology may have good grounds for identifying the Buddhistic Joy of Nirvana with the Vedantic Bliss of the Atman, Brahmananda.

Sri Sai Baba was (and even now is) shedding or showering joy upon his devotees, occasionally when they were away, but frequently when they were in his presence. Anna Saheb Dabolkar in his monumental Marathi biography of Baba,

Sai Satcharita, has thus described it:

"When one gazes and gazes upon Baba's face, all hunger and thirst are gone; what other joy can compare with this? One forgets all miseries of earthly existence".

And again!

"Gazing into his eyes, loses one's sense of individuality; Bliss gushes out from within and the mind sinks* into an expanse of sweetness".

Care Vanish :

And he further adds that the Vedic description of Brahman is mere bookish knowledge to most, while at Shirdi, it was the common and daily

experience of devotees. That Sri Dabolkar has not overstated fact is borne out by reliable testimony. The Hon. Mr. G. S. Khaparde, the Pepys of Shirdi, has noted the same in his daily diary during his seven months, stay with Baba in 1910, 1911 and 1912 and in his preface to a biography of Baba. In the latter, he says: "From the moment I approached him, all the load of my worldly cares disappeared, though only a few minutes before, it was felt to be exceedingly oppressive and such as to excite disgust of life".

It is needless to quote from the numerous other devotees who have spoken out their experience in similar terms; but we may first refer to those of a Marathi lady Mrs. Manager, and of a Parsi, Mr. Jahangir of Bombay.

A Paradise :

Mrs. Manager says:— "His (*i.e.*, Baba's) loving care combined with the powers made Shirdi a veritable paradise. Directly we went there, we felt safe, that nothing could harm us. When I went and sat in his presence, I always forgot my pain—nay the body itself with all 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".

Says Mr. Jahangir, "My experience with Baba was very happy. Whenever I went into his presence I forget everything. I had no trouble, no anxiety, no Care, no fear. Everything was blotted out and I passed a blissful time in his company. That was most wonderful. Even now, if he comes in dream vision, that effect is reproduced".

We shall next proceed to consider the instances of mystic bliss he granted through *Sakshatkara* or vision of divine forms.

A Brahmin doctor who was a devout Ramabhakta was persuaded to go to see Sri Sai Baba despite his strong antipathy to bow at the feet of a Muslim, as Baba was taken to be. But Baba's grace evidently in consideration of his devotion to Rama was shown to him from the time of his entry into the mosque compound. When he saw Baba there, he hurried up and fell at his feet, and later explained his sudden change of attitude to his friends. What he beheld in Baba's seat as soon as he approached it, was not the human figure of Baba, but the divine glory

of Sri Rama. Having found God in the flesh, he determined to get the highest out of Him,—viz. *Brahmananda*. As Baba did not grant it at once this petulant child started satyagraha. He resolved to fast and not to visit Baba at the Mosque unless he should be given the bliss he sought, or be sent for by Baba.

So he fasted three days. Baba, the kind mother that he was, knew of course how the wind blew and steered his own course. On the fourth day of the fast, an intimate friend of the doctor, not seen for many long years turned up at Shirdi— accidentally one might say, if one did not know Sri Sai Baba's vast powers of control. Overflowing with the joy of the friend's arrival, the doctor forgot his fast and his vow and accompanied him to the mosque. Baba asked him, 'Doctor, did any one send for you?' The doctor saw that nothing was or could be concealed from this powerful Sai, and he mentally pressed his quest. That midnight, Baba's grace vouchsafed a response, and the doctor was filled with a strange ecstasy for which there was no physical or physiological explanation and which was clearly a glimpse of *Paramananda* or *Siva Ananda* granted by Baba's will. But what he experienced was short lived. In response to his prayer after he went home, he again experienced this joy for a full fortnight. But after that, it ceased. The doctor was not yet qualified to get the perpetual *Ananda* that becomes part of one's nature or rather becomes one's self, i.e., the *Jivan Mukta* state. Baba gave him just an appetizer to make him work up to the goal.

A Yogic Doctor :

We may close this article with an experience of greater permanence than those above recited. Sri Sai Baba though invested with the nature and powers of a *Yogasiddha*, was never known to practice *Ashtanga Yoga* and sometime warned his devotees against the snares of the mystic powers for which parts of the yoga course are gone through. If, however, any one who had difficulties or had come to ruin in *yogabhyasa* sought relief at his feet, relief was afforded. The best instance known to this writer of such help was that given to Sri Upasani Maharaj. In the course of his *hata* yogic efforts at suspension of breath, his respiration became fitful and evidently on account of a paralytic attack on some of the respiratory organs, respiration would now and then suddenly threaten to

collapse, filling him with the fear, thus, of sudden death. No doctors and no yogis could help him. But Sri Sai Baba appeared to him at Rahuri 30 miles of Shirdi and gave him a very simple hydropathic recipe which almost completely cured him.

Stream of Sweetness :

Sri Sai Baba further drew him to Shirdi and there taught him the secret of the Yogic Ecstasy (as practised by Sufis).

Before he went to Shirdi, Sri Upasani Baba easily attained the *Samadhi* state and remained in it—even for days. But it was a *Sushka Samadhi*. It was no doubt free from the cares and sorrows of the world but there was no positive element of joy in it. Sri Sai Baba showed him how to turn his dry *Samadhi* into a joyous experience. He was made to retain a thin trace of his personality and with it draw in an inexhaustible stream of sweetness from Iswara, the Ocean of Sweetness (Rasa).

And this was a permanent gift. Sri Upasani Maharaj has ever since resorted to this form of ecstasy in preference to his former method. But even this ecstasy is but a preparation for the highest goal, the *Jivan Mukta* state in which one's personality merges for ever in *Sot-Chit-Ananda* from which there is no return.

XXXIV. SRI SAI BABA AND NATIONAL UNITY

The peaceful atmosphere of Sri Sai Baba's sansthan was never disturbed by politics or other controversies. In his own quiet unostentatious way, Baba was however laying the solid foundations of Indian Unity, and affording both by example and precept valuable suggestions for Indian's welfare. The greatest stumbling block in its way is the difficulty of yoking together the two great communities to the common cause and making them pull in unison and amity. Let us note Baba's contribution to this great task.

While at Bombay and in other places, heads were being broken, temples, mosques and houses were burnt down, at Shirdi each of these groups built or lent a hand in building the others' temples, mosques and houses.

Happy Co-operation :

A Hindu Revenue Inspector gave Baba stones for the reconstruction of His mosque; and Baba gifted them all away for the reconstruction of the Hindu temples in the village. The Hindus later collected thousands of rupees and reconstructed His mosque.

A devotee of Sri Sai Baba viz., Sri Upasani Maharaj has put up at Sakori (3 miles off Shirdi) a neat little mosque within twenty yards of the local Siva and Maruti temples, without any disturbance of public or private tranquillity. Hindus and Muslims have always joined together for the processions and celebrations in honour of Sri Sai Baba, and for prayers at the tomb; and both partook of the vegetarian offerings (*Naivedya*) brought by both to Baba, after due pronouncement of *Namaz*.

Against Coaversion :

Sri Sai Baba symbolised the coming unity of the two creeds in himself and in his abode. Like Kabir - Baba said he was Kabir in a former birth - he combined in himself the Hindu boring of ears with Muslim circumcision. He dressed like a Muslim Fakir, but was painted, garlanded and ornamented like a Hindu image. He spoke to Muslims in their Hindustani and to Hindus in their Marathi and quoted the *Koran* to the former and the *Puran* to the latter. He gave advice and help suited to each and was the friend and father of all. He was strictly conservative and kept each group or individual to its or his customary observances and lines of progress. He hated proselytism. Once when Bade Baba, the Malegaon Fakir, brought with him a Hindu recently converted to Islam, Baba mockingly asked the latter (knowing, of course, that the conversion was external and not a change of heart): "Well, have you changed your father?"

Pooja and Koran :

The building in which Baba resided was the 'masjid' of the Muslims; but it was styled 'Dwaraka-Mayi' by Baba himself and the Hindus. It contained the niche in the western wall called 'nimbar' representing the Caaba of Mecca, to which all orthodox Muslims should turn at times of prayer, and also a perpetual fire, with its sacred ashes, a platform round the sacred *tulasi* for *Pradakshina*, and a garlanded portrait of Baba for pooja. Hindu scriptures were read there by

day and the *Koran* by night. And at noon, worship of Baba was carried on with Hindu hymns to the accompaniment of deafening music. Fully justified was Baba's remark— "This is *Brahmin s mosque.*"

But this strange, though not unprecedented, assimilation of the two religions into one was not achieved without the exercise of the vast powers, the intense love and watchful zeal of Sri Sai Baba for many decades. And at times, especially at the outset, there were occasions for friction. But under Baba's care, actual friction was averted. These instances were very few—not more than 3 or 4 during a period of 3 or 4 decades, and they are the exceptions which prove the rule. We shall notice them very briefly.

Defies a Threat :

Painting Baba with sandal and worshipping him at the mosque was the first and foremost cause of dissatisfaction to Mussalmans. In fact, Baba himself disliked these and was long preventing their performance. But the loving heart of Sai could not long resist the persistent ardour of his Hindu 'children' and he finally yielded his reluctant assent. The Muslims of Shirdi, however, were not at first inclined to yield their assent. On the other hand, they invoked the aid of Sangamner Kazi and held a council of war at which it was resolved that further desecration of the mosque should be stopped by the use of force. They resolved to beat Mahlsa-pathy—this was probably in the nineties of the last century, when he was the only regular worshipper of Baba—in case he continued to paint and worship Baba at the mosque. When that feeble-bodied devotee learnt of the mischief that was brewing he stood outside the mosque and carried on his pooja of Baba. But Baba knew his own power, the weakness of the opposition and the vast advantages to the public of the development of his worship. He called Mahlsapathy into the mosque and ordered him to go on with the usual painting and pooja—defying terrorism to lift its head, if it dared. The Moulvi and other present were cowed down by the firmness of this Shirdi Wizard, and gave up all idea of molesting Mahlsapathy or any other worshipper.

Patban's Terrible Offer :

More than a decade after the above incident, when the worship of Baba had become general, marked and assertive, a few die-hards tried to stem this current^ and stop the "desecration of the mosque and the transformation of a Muslim fakir into a Hindu Idol". One midnight, in 1915 when Baba was sleeping at the *chavadi* along with R. A. Tarkhad, some other Hindus and a fierce Pathan, the last got up and telling Baba that the Hindus were "spoiling" and ruining him begged permission to cut all the Hindu throats immediately. R. A. Tarkhad woke up and shuddered at the prospect of being murdered in cold blood. But Baba the watchful mother that he was, came to the rescue. He took the entire responsibility for all the heterodox practices at the mosque on himself, and declared that it was *his* madness that spoiled the Hindus and that consequently his own throat might be cut, if that was desired. As this zealot for the purity of Islam was not willing to go so far, the matter was dropped.

Punished on the Spot:

A little later, another Pathan who left Police service for a fakir's life, was staying with Baba at Shirdi. His zeal first spent itself in shouting out the t'Kalam", throughout the night of the proximity of Baba. The villagers whose sleep was thus disturbed wished to drive him out. But Baba supported him, fed him and maintained him there. This "Rohilla" (as he was incorrectly named) though convinced by Baba's vast powers and goodness, that Baba was nothing less than *Paygambar* (*i.e.*, Prophet) felt at the same time that Baba was striking at the root of Muslim orthodox traditions. This feeling gathered strength in a short time and one day this "Rohilla" decided to murder Baba and approached him from behind with a club. But the omniscience of Baba was equal to the occasion. He simply turned back and with a glance and a touch pinned the would-be-murderer to the ground whence he was unable to lift himself without other's help. This was probably the last attempt at interference with the peaceful and united celebration of Baba's worship at Shirdi.

After Death :

When Baba passed away in October 1918, disputes arose as to the disposal of his mortal remains. Some Muslims were anxious to assert their right

to this "Muslim" saint's tomb, and to keep it under their own control. The majority of worshippers being Hindus resisted the demand. The ease with which the problem was solved showed how greatly Baba had toned down creed asperities at Shirdi. When the disputes were going on, and the corpse remained unburied, the customary Hindu worship was proceeding. The public authorities that came on the scene took a plebiscite, through *mahazars* which showed that the majority of devotees were in favour of respecting Baba's own wish to be interred in a recent edifice of his Hindu devotee, G. M. Buty. The Muslims agreed, stipulating only that they should have free access to the tomb and mosque as usual. The utter absence of mutual violence on this occasion speaks volumes for the toleration and co-operation so sedulously cultivated by Baba at Shirdi.

There are numerous saints all over the country, who have a following among both the communities. Is it too much to hope that they also would develop the spirit of toleration and amity as at Shirdi and render real Hindu-Muslim unity an *accomplished fact*?

XXXV. TEMPLE TRUSTEE PAYS FOR HIS CRIME

Sri Sai Baba occasionally narrated a few reminiscences of his own past births. These were never taken down and most are forgotten. But a few are still fresh in the memory of the hearers. One of these is given below, substantially as given out by Baba. The readers will note how every sentence of his brims with wisdom and virtue; and now, for centuries, Baba is the same Samartha carrying on his mission of helping humanity with his superhuman power, lofty principles and benign impartiality.

One morning, Sri Sai Baba strolled along till he came to a river bank. There he sat under a tree, admiring the dense foliage of an alley and lit his pipe with a pair of flints. A wayfarer came up and the hospitable Baba gave him a few puffs out of his pipe. Then a peculiar sound was heard.

Wayfarer: Let us see what the matter is.

Sai Baba: Matter! It is the croaking in pain of a frog seized by a snake. It is reaping the fruit of its own *karma*. What we have done in the past comes to us now as present suffering. And yet there is an outcry against Fate!

The wayfarer went out to see the frog for himself.

Sai .Baba (without leaving his seat):— The frog is caught by a huge serpent and is crying. But both frog and serpent were wicked in their past birth and have come into their present bodies to reap their reward.

The wayfarer, returning to Baba : Yes, I went and saw. A big frog, it is, in the mouth of a huge black serpent. In 10 or 20 minutes, it will be all over with the poor frog!

Sai Baba: No. *I am its father* and am here. Will I let the snake eat it? Just see how I realise it!

Then Baba walked on to the place where the frog was, The wayfarer who was going in advance suddenly took fright.

Wayfarer: Baba, let us go back. Do not go nearer. The serpent may fly at us.

Sai Baba : Do not fear.

Sai Baba then went near and thus addressed the creatures.

Sai Baba : Hallo! Veerabhadrapa! Even now, you have no pity for your enemy Basappa though he has now taken birth as a frog, just as you have turned into a serpent? Shame! Shame upon your hatred! Get rid of hatred and rest in peace!

These words acted like magic. The snake let go its, prey, dived into the river and was lost to sight. The frog hopped away and hid in some tree.

Wayfarer: What a wonder! I cannot see why the snake dropped its prey at your words. Which of these creatures is Veerabhadrapa, and which Basappa? Give me their full history, please.

Sai Baba resumed his seat, shared a few puffs with his visitor at his pipe and spoke :

Some 6 or 7 miles off my place, there was a village sanctified by a temple of Maheswara. That temple was getting dilapidated. So the villagers began to collect funds for its renovation. The treasurer appointed was a rich miser. He spent but little of the collections on the renovation which consequently made very poor progress; and he swallowed much of the public funds. Seeing the work thus hampered, God appeared in a dream and told the wife of the treasurer: "If you spend any money in renovating this temple, Maheswara will give it to you back a

hundredfold". On waking, the wife communicated the dream to her husband. But he sniffed "expenditure" as the drift of her dream and this Shylock would launch into no such venture. He replied that this was no business proposition. Was he not the man in charge of funds? If God meant business, would He not have come to him? And how far was he from her?

Another night, God again came to the wife in her dream and said : "Do not bother yourself about your husband and his money. Give, if you like, out of your own". The wife then told her lord that she was going to endow the temple with the value of her own jewels. They were worth Rs. 1000. Then this treasurer, not content with the amounts already embezzled by him, wanted to *do* Maheswara, even in this transaction. He told the wife that he would take the jewel himself and give God, i e., the temple, his vast stretch of land as its endowment; and the simple woman agreed. But the land was not his. It was the property of one Dubaki, a poor widow, who was just then too poor to redeem it. But there was no period of limitation for exercising the right of redemption. And the present possession of the land was worth nothing. It was barren saline coastland yielding nothing in the best of seasons.

Thus ended this transaction; and sometime later there was a terrific storm. Lightning struck down the house of the treasurer. He and his wife died.

That lady was born in the same village, as the daughter of the temple priest, to whom the above land had been given as service inam. And she was named Gowri. She had come back to enjoy the land and the priest who was very fond of her donated the land to her use. Then he adopted a boy Basappa who was no other than Dubaki, the mortgager of that land in the previous birth. Basappa was to have the reversion after or a joint right with Gowri. Gowri had to be married and the priest came to his great friend Sri Sai Baba, living in a mosque in that birth also, and asked for advice. Baba told him to wait,—for the man destined to marry her would himself soon turn up. Then came a poor boy of their caste named Veerabadrappa, and he married Gowri. Who was Veerabadrappa? That embezzler of public money, and God's money, the treasurer. He had been born of poor parents at Muttra and named Veerabadrappa.

Veerabadrappa was at first devoted to Baba as the latter had proposed his marriage to Gowri.

But the old hankering for wealth was still working in Veerabadrappa and he appealed to the Fakir Baba to get him wealth. Baba told him to wait, for the suitable time would be coming soon.

And it came, For that vast stretch of coast land, there was at last a demand and a sudden appreciation of value. It sold for Rs. 1,00,000 (just 100 times the worth of the jewels) a moiety of which was paid down in cash, the rest being payable in twenty-five annual instalments. Now was Veera-badrappa's chance. He tried to clutch at that money. Basappa was naturally hostile to his claims and resisted his efforts.

Baba's intercession was sought and Baba pointed out that Gowri had the right to the entire money and that none else should interfere. Veerabadrappa got angry with Basappa and Baba. He threatened to kill Basappa who, in his cowardice sought refuge from Baba. Baba plighted his word that he would shield him from the wrath of his wicked foe. Then the parties to this feud died. Veerabadrappa was born as the serpent and was still unrelenting in his hatred. The coward Basappa was born as a frog. Veerabadrappa tried even in this birth to kill his enemy.

Winding up, Baba said. "Hearing the miserable croaking of Basappa, and remembering my pledge to save him, I am here. I have kept my word and saved him".

Baba then changed his expression and said "God saved Baiappa, his devotee, by sending me. All this is God's *lila* or sport".

This may be taken for perfectly true history. For Baba never spoke anything but truth. This anecdote has been embodied in grand sonorous Overture in Dabolkar's *Sai Sat-charita* Ch. 47.

That book is read for daily study, "Parayana" by numerous devotees of Sri Baba. One day, Mr, G. B. Dattar, B.A..LL.B., a pleader of Thana, was reading it. A lady in the bouse was listening to it in a half drowsy condition. She suffered from periodical internal pains as she listened she burst out half involuntarily, in that

drowsy condition, and said "Baba, you have such pity for a dumb irrational creature. Have you no pity for me, a human being?"

Then she heard a voice emanating apparently from a peg in the wall saying "Will you give me Rs. 5 *dakshina* for the Dasstrah?" And she answered she would, if she was cured. At once she woke up from her dozing condition and had the money sent up to Sai Sansthan. She began to improve and in some hours, her agony considerably abated. This was in 1932.

XXXVI. WHEN GIFTS ARE PROMISED AND FORGOTTEN

More than thirty years ago, as Sri Sai Baba was seated at this mosque, two Decani Brahmins came and prostrated before him. Baba asked Shama to ask one of them to pay Rs. 15 as *dakshina*. Shama asked and the money was paid readily. The other man found that Baba did not ask him for anything. Yet as he felt strongly in the matter, he voluntarily paid Rs. 35. Baba just handled the amount and promptly returned it. Shama was surprised and spoke to Baba.

Shama : Lord! I have never seen the like of this! The thirty-five rupees voluntarily paid, you refuse to accept. The other and smaller sum, fifteen rupees you beg for and accept* What is the discrimination !

Baba: Shama, you do not know. I receive nothing from anybody. This Rs. 35 is not ours. But the Rs. 15 is Datta's and he has made it over to "Masjid Ayi" (a phrase denoting Baba's personality as functioning at masjid).

Baba paused a while and further explained his statements in his characteristic indirect way which none but the concerned parties could follow.

Baba: He was first poor and earned nothing. He then made a vow to Datta, that if he should secure employment by Datta's grace, the first month's salary should be made over to that God. He did secure employment on Rs. 15. That was long, long ago. Then there was steady increase in his salary which went up by leaps and bounds to Rs. 700 and over. In the full tide of prosperity, the old vow was clean forgotten and Datta's debt remained unpaid. The force of this *Karma* drove him here. So I asked him to give my fifteen rupees as a *dakshina*.

Then was there another incident. I was going on by the seaside. There was a huge and beautiful house there—owned by a rich Brahmin, of good family.

The Brahmin gave me my night meal. There was a clean and neat place, near the cupboard. He pointed out that place, as good for me to sleep in. I slept there. When I was sound asleep, that man used his skill in the grafter's art and quietly removing a stone slab in the wall, gained access to me. He gently cut off an entire roll of note—thirty notes, each of the face value of Rs. 1000. I woke up in the morning and was aghast at the loss of my fortune. I was greatly upset and did not know what to do. That Brahmin must have done it. I felt sure. But where was the proof? I lost all interest in food and drink and sat on the verandah of that house moaning over my fate. A passing fakir noticed my evident dejection and made kind enquiries as to its cause. I unburdened myself of the tale of my woe. He said he "Do act up to my directions, and you will recover yours. There is the fakir that I shall mention to you. Make a vow that you will go and see him if the money is recovered. Meanwhile give up your favourite dish of food, and do not taste it till the money is recovered". I followed the fakir's directions and recovered the money. I left that house. Again I went by the sea. There was a steamer I wanted to get into. But the master of the boat would not allow me to get in as the boat was already full. Then a belted peon said: "These are our men". On that peon's intercession, I got in. Then I took train and came to Masjid Ayi.

As Baba was speaking, Shama was much mystified. But the two visitors were deeply impressed and were shedding tears.

Then at Baba's bidding, Shama took the visitors home and fed them. There Shama observed that Baba's talk was quite mystifying, since Baba never went to the seaside, never had 30,000 rupee, never lost money, and never recovered them as was just stated. But the visitors said that every word that Baba spoke was the truth—about them.

The first visitor had indeed made a vow to Datta dedicating the first month's salary to God, and said that having risen from Rs. 15 to over Rs. 700 he had forgotten all about it, and that Baba who was undoubtedly God was very kind to him in calling up that amount and releasing him from the obligation under the vow.

The second visitor also confirmed the account given by Baba about Rs. 30,000. When Baba said "I", that only denoted this visitor who was the person despoiled of thirty notes, each a thousand in value. The "Brahmin", i.e., cook who had served him for 30 years, one night removed a slab in the wall and approaching this visitor purloined the entire sum. A report to the police was fruitless. So he was sitting with a long and down cast face at his verandah, when a fakir told him that if a vow be made to Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi (to go there if the money is recovered) the money would be surely recovered; and that meanwhile, he should forego the use of his favourite dish.

"I like rice best and I vowed not to taste it and I made the other vow also", said he "In 15 days the cook came to me of his own accord and returned the entire amount stolen by him. I then was tossing between Bombay and Goa by sea. Baba again appeared in my dream, to remind me of the unfulfilled vow. At Goa we made up our minds to start for Shirdi— i.e., to go by boat to Bombay and thence to take train. But the boat at Goa was full and space was refused. Suddenly there was on board a belted peon totally unknown to us; and he said, "Please let them come in; they are our men". So we were admitted. The visitor added; "What vast knowledge is Babas! What vast control over every thing and person is His! But for Him, how would the thief return such a large sum and how would we even get a place in the steamer! Baba is *Sarva Antaryami*. He is inside each heart, knows its secrets and controls it".

XXXVII. WHEN THE FAITHLESS GROW PENITENT SRI SAI BABA'S WAY,..

Some 40 years ago, two friends were discussing their prospects for the Law Examination.

One said that he was sure to pass, though he had not prepared for it because Sri Sai Baba had assured him. The other, Sapatnekar, simply laughed at his friend's confidence and jeered at him and at Baba.

When the results came, the friend's name was in the pass list. Sapatnekar was surprised, but still, "That must be a fluke", he thought. He had no faith in, nor regard for Baba.

Then Sapatnekar settled at Akkalkote and practised as a lawyer. Ten years passed. And then he lost his only son and it broke his heart. He sought relief and peace of mind by pilgrimage and study of Vedanta. No peace came to him however. Then he remembered that he had treated Sri Sai Baba's name and powers with contempt and feared that perhaps the bereavement was a punishment. Any how it would be good

to go and see Baba at Shirdi and he started. When he went and prostrated before Baba, the latter uttered the chilling words "*Chal Hat*", i.e., "Getaway". This was repeated a second time and even a third. He left Shirdi, thoroughly mortified.

A year passed and then he was preparing for a pilgrimage to Kasi. Just then his wife saw a fakir in her dream, who told her: "Come to me. Why do you make vain efforts?" This showed them that Baba had relented and was more favourably disposed. Sapatnekar then came to Shirdi and fell at Baba's feet. His wife who saw Baba then for the first time noticed that Baba's was the exact figure that came to her in the dream. Baba, however, still uttered "*Chal Hat*" when he fell at His feet. This time he was more penitent and persevering. He admitted to himself that he did not deserve any better treatment and resolved to see Baba later in the day in the absence of a crowd, to beg pardon for his past contempt. This he did and then Baba kindly stroked his head. Baba strengthened his faith by addressing a shepherdess that had come there, in his characteristic fashion. Baba narrated the various vicissitudes of Sapatnekar's life,—never mentioning his name however. His heart was heaving with wonder and joy. None else could know all that Sai then knew and spoke out.

Then the Gift :

Then Baba still addressing the shepherdess pointed to Sapatnekar and said, "This man blames me and charges me with killing his son. Now, I will bring that very child back to his wife's womb".

With these words, Baba placed his blessing hand over Sapatnekar's head and added : "Place entire faith in my words. Your object will be quickly attained". Sapatnekar again glowed with joy and his faith grew in intensity.

At parting Baba gave him a coconut and directed him to place it in the fold of his wife's upper cloth and go away rejoicing.

He did so and in 12 month's time, a son was born to him. Baba's words, he then realised, were never nature, never unfulfilled.

XXXVIII. RIGHT ATTITUDE TOWARDS INSECTS AND REPTILES CONFLICTING ADVICE

Numerous are the instances when Sri Sai Baba saved his devotees from snakes or death from snake bites. In some instances, he actually foretold the accident and vouchsafed protection.

At Shirdi, one day, Nana Saheb Dangle who had acquired considerable proficiency in Astrology, told G. M. Buty, a rich devotee from Nagpur, that there was a "*ganda*" or danger to Buty's life that day. A little later, both of them went to the masjid and sat near Baba, mentioning nothing of the apprehended danger. But Baba himself broached the subject and addressed Buty.

Baba : What does Nana say? He sees Death coming to you, eh? We have no need to fear. Strike ! Let me see how you strike and kill !

Spared Long :

Later, in the evening, Buty went out to ease himself; and near him was a snake. Both he and his servant saw the snake; and before they could fetch a stick to despatch it, it moved away. The "*ganda*" or danger had indeed come. But under the eye of Baba, that watches everything everywhere, the danger was averted. Buty had much pious work for Baba yet to do; and Baba shielded his life and limb for years till the arrival of the fated hour in 1921.

While in this case the snake escaped, in all others even in the presence of Baba the snake was clubbed to death. Did Baba approve of it?

The general question of clemency to noxious reptiles and insects bristles with difficulties and conflict of interest. Texts may be quoted on each side.

Tukaram, a great authority in the Maharashtra has said that snakes and scorpions are God (Narayana) and that they should be worshipped—of course, at a safe and respectful distance. The Sage of Dakshineswar preached the same doctrine, stressing the precautionary clause at the end, in respect of tigers, etc.,

but showed by example that bugs and other such vermin may be killed. *Srlmad Bhagavad Skanda VII* says: Even a saint may rejoice at the killing of snakes and scorpions. H. S, Dixit, ex. M.L C. was greatly perplexed by these considerations; and he put the question in his own peculiar way to Baba, "To prevent death from snake bite people kill venomous snakes as soon as they see them. Is that right?" Baba said "No. A snake will not kill a person, unless so ordered by God (*i.e.*, Destiny). If that is ordered, that person will not succeed in killing the snake and escaping destiny."

Numerous devotees encounter snakes at Shirdi not infrequently; and they generally let them pass scot free, treating them as Baba in reptile form.

XXXIX. HOW DO MASTERS REDEEM DEVOTEES ?

STEADY UPLIFT ENDING IN FREEDOM FROM CYCLE OF BIRTHS

How do Saints or Samarthas help humanity? This interesting question is answered in the following statement prepared jointly by B. V. Narasimhaswami and Bharatananda.]

The Supreme Being is thought of as having five aspects or functions with names appropriate to each :

Creation : Brahma in conjunction with Saraswathi.

Maintenance—Vishnu or Narayana in conjunction with

Laxmi. Destruction —Rudra in conjunction with Kali.

Iswara in conjunction with Maheswari. Redemption—Sadashiva in conjunction with Kripa.

There are avatars combining often several of these elements. The life work of a Samartha Sadguru lead one to identify him with the Redemption aspect of the Supreme Being.

Jivas, like ourselves, are going on from birth to birth. They are the Supreme Being, but shot out of Him by an initial act of nescience (Maya). Then the initial ignorance developed by a series of their *Karmas*, whirls them at a terrific velocity in the circle of Samsara. The Jivas feel powerless to get out of it. They are moved by desire (Vasana) to acts (Karma) which in turn strengthen desire. So the vicious circle of *Karma* and *Vasana* catches the Jivas in its

powerful grip; and unaided they feel they cannot wriggle out. If they try to do so, they only get more and more entangled—more and more involved in Samsara. How are these *Jivas* then to be helped out of this involution in evolution, so that they may evolve themselves back into the state of the Supreme Being?

Avatars to Help:

At special times Avatars of the Supreme Being come down to raise humanity in masses. The Avatars do not as a rule set to themselves the task of caring for particular Jivas spiritual advance. So the work of the Avatars finds its supplement and fulfilment in the work of the Samarthas *Sadgurus*. These with the vast powers, knowledge and bliss of the Supreme proceed to deal with individual Jivas and help them out of their involution to evolve into the Supreme Being. Samarthas like Sri Sai Baba are called Samarthas because of their vast—nay unlimited, power, wisdom and bliss and they are called *Sadgurus*, because they appear in order to act as the Guru for individual Jivas to lead them into the *Sat* or Supreme. The powers of Samarthas may, to a superficial view, appear like the feats of a thought-reader, magician or necromancer. But there are unmistakable differences between these two sets of powers in respect of their origin, their nature or limits, the manner of exercise and the purpose or motive of such exercise. The magician and others of his like acquire their power and exercise it with great effort; and its exercise is within definite limits of time, space, etc. and the purpose of the exercise may be either sordid or at any rate clearly personal. The Samartha, on the other hand, has not to work for the powers; the powers come as pan of his realisation and perfection; and exercise of his powers is not the result of effort. These powers are not limited to any particular sort or class, as even *Ashta Siddhis* are limited in comparison with the Samarthas. The purpose of the Samarthas, exercise is pure mercy for the *Jiva*, whose spiritual advance is distinctly furthered thereby.

How They Work :

We may proceed to examine the main feature of the work of the Samartha Sadguru.

The point at which a Jiva's involution or *Samsaric* life turns to evolution or the Path of Redemption is the appearance of the *Sadguru* to that Jiva. How did the Jiva start his Jiva-hood? By forgetting its original, its real, nature as Brahman and thus disturbing the harmony of the *Gun*as that prevailed in Brahman till the forgetting. At that moment, a disturbance in the *Gun*as took place and the Jiva started its samsaric career. The original Brahmic state was the clear unruffled waters of the ocean. The disturbance caused in it a small whirl. This whirl is the Jiva; and it fancied itself (and this is the primary ignorance) different from the waters of the ocean, by reason of its being a whirl. The *Sadguru* comes and restores the harmony that prevailed before the Jiva started this whirling. The *Sadguru* shows the whirl that it is water after all; the Jiva realising that truth sinks into peace as part of the ocean; and thus primal harmony is restored by the *Sadguru*. This is the essence of *Sadgurus* work. But the general lines of his work we shall next consider.

The Initial Help :

First the Jiva is under a heavy load of past *Karm*as which weighs him down and pins him to *Samsara*. He has to reap the pains and pleasures he has sown. If he tries to remove one item of load he does two more acts and thereby increases the load. This is because of his weakness, and want of clear vision, and of ability to know and direct himself aright. He requires, therefore, the help of one who knows the situation exactly and what will meet it in the individual's special circumstances. Such a guide and director is the *Sadguru*. So the Jiva has to go to a *Sadguru*. But unfortunately even the desire to approach a *Sadguru* and the idea of how to approach him properly are foreign to the Karma-bound Jiva. So taking advantage of a little *punya* (merit) acquired by the Jiva by means of previous contact (however remote) with the *Sadguru* or any other holy person, the *Sadguru* mercifully makes the approach easier for the Jiva. By his vast powers, the *Sadguru* helps the poor Jiva, even temporally—in a way under such marvellous circumstances that the Jiva is pulled out of his vicious circle, and roused to a sense of admiration, gratitude and reverence to the Samartha, noting especially how divine the *Sadguru* is contrasted with the earthly Jiva.

Later Development :

Thus the Jiva gets prepared to and does attach himself by love to the Samartha Sadguru and the latter increases his faith by showing him more and more of his vast knowledge, vast power, vast kindness and love—all exercised on behalf of the devotees out of pure mercy. As part of this same mercy, the Guru directs the devotee to do some acts which will increase the *punya* or good Karma and reduce the *papa* or bad Karma of the devotee. The more good Karma is done, the more is the doer reducing his heavy load of past bad Karma, without committing fresh bad Karma. Results of previous Karmas are even advanced and regulated by the Samartha's omniscience and omnipotence to help his dependent reap his harvest more quickly.

But in this process the Jiva is apt to get attached to the doing of *punya* or meritorious work. Though they enable him to get over *Rajas* and *Tamas*, they still bind him through *Satva*, as they will carry him to repeated births in nice worlds i.e., of the Gods, Even this Satvic bondage must be rent as under.

So the Guru next weans the devotee even from good works. For the purpose, the devotee must have an attachment higher and stronger than good works. That is the attachment to, and love for the Guru, ending in surrender to the Guru. Attachment to the Guru is useful no doubt. But its early stages leave in the mind of the devotee the idea that he is still the person directing his affection to the Guru, and doing the appropriate service therefor and that he is doing something worthy and meritorious. It nearly approaches detachment by reason of absence of personal motive but is still tainted with Egoism, i.e., with the sense of the devotee being an agent, a voluntary performer of action. This sense also must be knocked on the head or banished. Its absence is surrender to or identification with the Guru. Identification and surrender are almost the same, with a slight difference. In surrender, the process is marked by humility and a desire to end the self, which need not be distinctly present in identification with the Guru. Identification may be the result of surrender but is seldom its cause. The fruit of identification is the destruction of the primal *Maya* or nescience under which the Jiva started its separate existence. Surrender restores the balance (or

harmony) of *gunas* that was upset when the separate existence of the Jiva commenced.

Towards Surrender :

This surrender is brought about when the feeling of the devotee towards his Guru gets intensified. Such intensification is comparable to a huge world-wide dynamo attracting an electrified atom. The devotee, the atom, may however still be feeling or fancying that it is moving of its own accord to the huge dynamo, the Guru and then the devotee may even raise the question how this surrender is to be effected and accelerated.

In this connection, we may consider another line on which the devotee Jiva's progress is proceeding, The devotee starts with devotion to his Guru or God, who is felt to be entirely outside him, i.e., outside the devotee's body. The devotee is then under the influence of *Rajas* and *Tamas* and identifies himself almost entirely with the body. But increasing contact with the Sad-Guru and increasing faith in him, with good works, especially selfless, meritorious works, reduce the *Rajasic* and *Tamasic* elements of the devotee and wear off his *Dehatmabuddi*, i.e., the idea that he is the body.

His ideas of God get broader and finer; and more emphasis is laid on God's and Guru's spiritual nature which bursts the shackles of finite space limits. The Guru God is not confined to the small human body but extends far beyond—covering the entire universe on one side, and, on the other, is very subtle and therefore enters as *Sarva Antaryami* into all hearts. The devotee begins to feel that the Guru-God is his own *Antaryami*, i.e., he sees him within himself. The Samartha's vast powers enable the devotee to obtain the finer sight actually to see the Guru within his own heart. The inner presence of God-Guru can never be inactive. His real living presence within asserts itself more and more and swallows up the Jivahood of the Jiva. This is self-surrender of the Jiva when viewed from the latter's stand-point. With this swallowing up or surrender, all old Karmas, good and bad, are swallowed up.

The Final Snap :

The *Vasana*s or tendencies to do fresh *Karma* have also to be destroyed in the Jiva's progress. *Vasanas* are desires or desire tendencies directed to lower objects (whether earthly or otherworldly objects). These have to be swallowed up only by a stronger and purer desire or affection, by something more exacting than earthly love. As stated already, such stronger passion is the devotee's love for the Guru, and it is that love that blossoms into complete self-surrender. This surrender alone totally extinguishes *Vasanas*. Once *Vasanas* are destroyed, there is no more ego, no more of vicious circle of Samsara, and the Evolution of the Jiva into the Supreme is complete. Then the Jiva sees that the Samarth Sadguru has all along been with him, inside and outside, and that the Jiva, the Sadguru and the Supreme Being are and always have been one and the same Real.

SRI SHIRDI SAI BABA'S NECTOR WORDS

1. The secret of happiness lies in serving God almighty with joy and abandon.
2. Contentment is the harbinger of mental peace and happiness.
3. Speak with love to everyone, and take great care not to hurt the feelings of others.
4. The true essence of God is bliss. Therefore, by surrendering at His Lotus Feet you too can partake of this supreme anand.
5. True bhakti means intense and self-abnegating love for the divine.
6. A dedication of all your actions to God or Guru is the true essence of devotion.
7. Gnan (Knowledge) which is not tinged with bhakti (Devotion) is bleak and uninspiring.
8. Inflicting pain on others by body, mind and speech is sin; the reverse is merit, good.
9. Welcome whoever comes to your house, give water to the thirsty, cloth to the naked, keep in your house the helpless; this will satisfy Sri Hari (God).