

II

23rd May, 1936.

Ramachandra Vaman Modak, B.A., Engineer, Seth's House (near Peru's gate) Sadasiv pet, Poona (Sai Leela Masik, Vol III, part 9, p.399: Udhi used to drive off snakes from the house) says:

I went to Sai Baba about 1909 and was impressed well enough to repeat my visits. My last visit was in 1916. The most momentous of my visits was in 1912. My employment was that of Senior Government Auditor of Municipal and lo-

cal accounts of West Kandesh Division and my headquarters was nominally at Bombay. My wife and children, however, were stationed by me at Dhulia. In 1912, I had some official troubles or foreboding of troubles especially with a particular higher officer, who was waiting for an opportunity to sack me. They were trying to force me to appear for a departmental test, in which of course that particular officer would have an excellent opportunity to sack me and even declare me unfit to continue in service. The question was, if I should face that danger and by passing the test qualify myself for higher appointments or simply remain safe on my pay of Rs.120 and refuse to go up for the test. At this juncture, having learnt of Sai Baba's omniscient kindness and vast powers of control I determined to make him my sole guide and Providence to help me in deciding aright on this matter of great importance. I left Bombay for Shirdi (which is outside my jurisdiction) informing no one and taking no leave from my department to enable me to be away from work. I hoped also to return quickly in which case no leave would be necessary. I went straight to Shirdi. It always gives me (and other devotees also) great relief to be in the presence of Baba. *Care leaves one as soon as he is in that presence and happiness fills his soul.* Next morning, at 7 A.M (i.e. the usual time to go to Baba to take leave), I was being put off. I could not start as Baba had given me no leave. He knew full well that I had gone there in an irregular way without the sanction of my superior and unknown even to my family. If there were consequences to be faced, Sai had to face them. But Shama i.e., Madhavrao Deshpande knew my difficulties and interceded on my behalf, telling Baba: "He has stayed several days. Give him leave to go." Baba gruffly answered him that I had gone to see Baba and not to see Madhav Rao. Turning to me also, he asked whether I had gone there to see him (Baba) or to see Madhav Rao. Baba gave me the assurance that all would go well with me regarding my official problem as in other matters. In fact he detained me at Shirdi when the test was going on at Bombay. The die was thus cast and Baba settled it as the best for me that I should not go up for the test examination.

On the night of my fifth day's stay, I had a dream. I saw therein that I was back at home, that my young daughter

was welcoming me, asking me where I had been all these days. I woke up and felt assured that Baba was going to give me leave. At once I prepared for departure. I dressed myself up and despite my friend's protest that there was no guarantee that Baba would give me leave even that day, I went to the gate of the mosque. Baba was in a towering passion fuming and fretting with a stone in his hand and was moving up and down at the mosque. He saw me standing at the gate. In ten minutes' time, he calmed down and took his seat on the *gadi*. That was the place where he should be approached and I went and prostrated. Of his own accord, he said **"Take udhi and go away."** That was the way leave was granted for departure. "But," I asked Baba, "Where am I to go? Please tell me that" - as I wanted definite oral solution by him of my problem- whether I should go to Bombay direct, which would mean attending the test or whether I should go to Dhulia which would mean refusing boldly to attend the test. Baba's answer was **"Go home, You children are anxiously waiting for you."** That confirmed my dream and settled my course. I went to Dhulia and only later on to Bombay.

When I went to Bombay, in the usual course, some trouble might have arisen on account of my unauthorised absence. But, strangely enough, everything went on smoothly. My clerks, who would have to go with me on my tours, wondered where I had gone away. My family fancied I was at Bombay all the time. Anyhow by Baba's grace, my absence was not officially noticed and did not lead to any official trouble. On the way from Shirdi to Bombay on this occasion, as usual, I had to go naturally via Manmad. The Deputy Collector of the Division was camping there at Manmad and he had sent me a letter asking me to halt en route at Manmad and I intended to meet the D.C. But when I started and thought of stopping in Manmad Baba said **"Pshaw, Give that up. He is not here. There is no hurry,"** At that time, I did not understand what Baba meant. But, when I got down at Manmad I learnt that the D.C had got a wire from which made him suddenly break up his camp there and hurry away elsewhere. So Baba was right, as he always is. During these six days of my Shirdi stay, Baba was impressing my heart with spiritual experience, I felt that he was all in all for me and that I needed nothing more for my mundane or spiritual wel-

fare. That was a decidedly critical and precious period of my life.

I had, however, my usual inclination to rely on my Vedantic and religious studies. I had also not taken to Sai with the great earnestness which so many devotees evince. I was still very much in the world. In 1914, I had a confirmatory experience of what I had received at the hands of Sai in 1912. Another great saint gave me impressive hints of the value of Sai as a guide and of the experience he (Sai Baba) had imparted to me. A lady had asked me to go to Govind Bua at Sonagir, more especially as it lay on my way home i.e., to Dhulia. But, I had engaged a *tonga* to take me direct to Dhulia and fixed up a programme not providing for an intermediate halt. But, as fate would have it, the cart in which I and my cook travelled, broke down, the iron tyre came off clean and at least three hours would be needed to mend the wheel and continue the journey. The place where it broke down was Sonagir. My cook went, bathed and took *darshan* of the Bua and without any bidding from me asked him if I (his master) could come up for *darshan*. "Yes", was the answer, "let him come after a bath." So I bathed and went to him with a coconut and a rupee. Then, he said "Hallo, you rogue, you have had a precious thing given to you. You tasted it for a while, and yet, you run hither and thither after worthless things". That, of course, was a reference to Sai Baba's gift to me in 1912 during those six days. I understood it in that way. He further said "In any case, you have come to our own house" and thus identified himself with Sai Baba. Thereafter, he asked me to provide *biksha*. "Prepare *sira* and *puri* for me." That meant, I found, that I had to pay for that day's *prasad* or food at the Mutt. I did so. The Bua sat up for the meal at my request. We had a *lota* cup and filled it with water and placed it near Bua's seat. The Bua dipped his finger into the cup of water extracted from it miraculously a thin *puri* and ate it saying "Here also we prepare *puri*." The *puri* he brought out of the cup of water was thin and nice. That prepared for the *biksha* was thick and rough. How *puri* could be extracted from a cup of water was the wonder. It impressed us with his wonderful power. Such a mighty man

assured me of the value of the experience I got from Sai Baba in 1912.

I had not many opportunities of seeing Sai Baba. In 1916 was my last visit to him. Then, with my wife who also had great devotion to him, I went to Baba and returned the same day. In 1919, I retired. Sai Baba is not dead. He is still as ever. It is in a strange invisible ethereal manner. I feel his guidance, direction and control in my affairs. I have felt it on many occasions. For instance, in 1919, I retired on a pension of Rs. 81-8-0. But retiring was good for me. As soon as I retired, I joined a friend in working certain mills and from 1919 up to 1930, I had a monthly income of about Rs.250. This was Sai's provision for me.

I have always had indifferent health and actually my eyes have given me great trouble. I have lost one eye, and I am slowly developing a cataract in the other. But Sai Baba, whom I am worshipping every Thursday and remembering constantly has been looking after my interests here and hereafter. I feel no anxiety for my temporal or spiritual future. Both are in Baba's hands; and I am safe. Here is another instance of Baba's kind care for me and mine. In 1916, I was laid up with fever, cough etc., at Nasik. An old friend of mine in the medical service undertook my treatment and had prescribed chloral hydrate for my cough or bronchitis, as he diagnosed it to be. My wife had, however, a fear that my case was not so simple. She prayed to Sai Baba and sent for Col. Buckley. As soon as the colonel came and examined me, and looked at the bottle of chloralhydrate, he took the previous doctor (who was his subordinate) to task for his poor diagnosis and declared the case to be one of pneumonia- double pneumonia, and threw away the chloralhydrate as harmful, before it was administered to me. Then, under his treatment and by Baba's grace, I pulled through. It was really by Baba's grace that my wife was inspired to send for an able doctor and that the wrong prescription and treatment were changed at the very nick of time- just when the wrong and harmful drug was about to administered to me.

