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Shridhar Narayan Kharkar, aged 57, Kayasta Prabhu, Accountant, Secretariat, 37 Charni Road, Thana, Says:

My earliest period, that is infancy, was wellstocked and fed with religious ideas and ideals by the pious prudence of my grandfather. When I was thus developing the orthodox side of my religious study and practice, Mr. Appa Kulkarni, Deputy Collector, a very pious soul, showed me the picture of Sai Baba that he was devotedly attached to. That was my first contact with Baba. Very soon after that I got from Mr. Dabholkar a picture of Baba, a number of Sai Lila Masiks and a packet of Baba's udhi that came on a day. I was unwell; and on the second day, I got alright and started my worship of Baba which steadily grew thenceforward.

The beginning of my faith in Baba was marked by a remarkable dream or vision.

The picture I got from Mr. Dabholkar I took to my pooja room but when I was taking it near the picture of the Akkalkot Saint that I was already worshipping, some impulse made me withdraw the new picture. 'Hallo! This is the Moslem's picture. How could it be placed next to the holy Hindu saint?' So thinking I kept it apart, a little distance from (and not in the same group with) Akkalkot Maharaj's picture.

I had a dream that night. In the morning, I first forgot all about the dream but when I began to worship, I at once recalled the details of my night dream. In the dream, I saw a fakir robbed like Sai Baba coming towards the oti or veranda on which I and some one else were sitting. I got up to welcome that fakir. Perhaps I was going to make some individuous distinction. At any rate to prevent such a distinction

being made, the person who was next to me told me this (Sai Baba) is not different from Akkalkot' and I was directed to treat him on the same footing as Akkalkot Maharaj. Recalling the dream, I rearranged the pictures and placed Sai Baba's picture along with Akkalkot Maharaj's and worshipped him.

By Baba's kindness, devotion to Sai Baba has increased by leaps and bounds not only with me but also amongst all the members of my family. I read up all available books on Sai Baba and my wife and children (and God has given me my quiverful) all have taken to Baba worship and show such a great zeal that in case I fail to attend to arati or pooja of Baba, someone else is ready to take it up.

At first, there appeared to be some exceptions to my felicity in this respect. My mother was living away from me for many years. But, by the grace of God and Baba, she came to live with me. But at first, seeing the worship I paid to Baba's picture and my visits to Shirdi she was displeased on the ground that Baba was a Moslem. But, Baba's kindness towards me and her was most remarkable. He worked a gradual change in her feelings. As she was not for Baba, I took other members of my family with me to Shirdi but not my mother. After 2 or 3 such years, i.e. in 1933. She wished to go to Shirdi and pay here respects to Baba's shrine, and asked my wife and daughter to see that she was taken to Shirdi. I was very glad to see the change worked in her. Baba's kindness made a great change in her attitude. Extremely orthodox though she was, she dropped her orthodox scruples when devotion to Sai Baba suggested the contrary course. She was well impressed with all she saw at Shirdi. The visit to Shirdi was none too soon. Shortly after our return from Shirdi, she breathed her last at my residence at Thana. It was a great kindness on the part of Baba to have brought a change in her and given her darsan of the Samadhi just in time before she passed away. I can easily multiply instances of Baba's kindness to me and my family. But, it is needless. It is enough to say that I feel Baba is guiding us and watching over our interests and actions in everything.

I shall give only two instances to show how other members of my family are sharing the kind and merciful care that Baba bestows on his own. My second son, Govind, was

hungering and thirsting to have the joy of visiting Baba's samadhi, and Dwarakamai at Shirdi. So in 1934 for Ramnavami celebration when our family friends Mr.G.B.Datar and family were going to Shirdi my son accompanied them. When he went to Dwarkamai (i.e.) the mosque, he was alone with Baba's eyes from the portrait seem to pierce into you, wherever you may stand in the hall. My son gazed with rapture at the portrait and closed his eyes. He heard then a distinct and audible voice aalas (Have you come?) That is the parental affectionate greeting he had. He opened his eyes and found himself alone. There was no other to utter those words of welcome, but Baba. About 8 years back, my daughter was in the family way and we had taken her to our village at Khar (some 2 or 3 miles off Thana). When the delivery was to take place, there was no proper medical aid. My relations were blaming me for not providing a place at Thana for the delivery. My wife and told me that it the delivery was obstructed. The child had evidently died and could not easily come out. There was great pain and anxiety was felt by the patient and by all of us. It was midnight or rather 2 A.M. When the condition was reported to be so painful and anxious, I was helpless. Suddenly, it dawned upon me that I had a safe source in Baba's udhi. My wife took the udhi and applied it to my daughter. Within 30 minutes or one hour of the application the child came out. It was dead, but my daughter's life was saved and our anxieties were at an end. A doctor came in the morning and wondered how it had come out. He thought that ill trained people like the midwife would have thrust their hands in and created danger of septic and possible post-parturition troubles. He was surprised to learn that mere udhi without any physical interference resulted in the expulsion of the child, the placenta and everything.

All my girls take part in the service of Baba and daily perform their arati & c. A week or so before my daughter's delivery, my son informed me that Baba had just appeared in his dream and called our "Nana, Nana. (meaning myself) Where is he? Why is he afraid? Apply my udhi." Though my son had told me this, I did not recall it at the time of my daughter's serious troubles; but instinctively I resorted to the aid of Baba's udhi. Long afterwards I thought over the matter and found that in my son's dream, baba had given me a

forewarning of the impending danger and shown me the way out of it. And when I failed to realise this at the critical moment, I was made unconsciously to utilise the very way he had mentioned.