

XXII

19th September, 1936.

Balwant Hari Karnik, aged 54, employee in Bombay Customs Department, Ghodbunder Road, Bandra, says:

I am a worshipper of Sai Baba, I attend to domestic worship of Baba and I regularly visit Shirdi every year.

My faith began with listening to Das Ganu's Kirtans about Sai Baba. I went to Sai Baba first in 1911. His eyes so powerfully impressed me with faith in him-though I had no talk with him, that I resolved to visit him every year. My parents visited him soon after I did. After that, we had regular family worship of Sai Baba.

I have no experience to report about Sai Baba. I almost always went to him without special reasons or requests to make. In 1918, Guru Poornima, it occurred to me that I might ask him about my spiritual welfare. But, he was in a very unfavourable mood and so I was going away dissatisfied. But, as I was getting into my tonga, Nana Wali came to me, embraced me and said: "alama tera accha karega"

In 1928, my wife who had seen Sai Baba and developed Sai Bhakti, passed away. Before the fatal hour, she was unconscious for 6 to 7 days and was suffering from postparturition troubles for 9 months. I took Baba's photo and placed it before her. Just before dying, she got conscious, folded her hands and made namaskar to Baba's picture and to me and told her elder sons to attend to the younger ones and passed away. This was very great grace of Baba to ensure her peace and a sadgati. (anayasen maran)

I use the terms sadhu, sant and sat purusha as having the same meaning.

Baba took from me a dakshina of Rs.10 at my first visit. That left me without money for the return journey. But, just at the critical moment, my friend Mr.Toser (now Swami Narayanashram of Wai) turned up and lent me the necessary sum.

Once, I and my wife wanted to go to Pandharpur and other holy places and so took Rs.100 with us. But first, we

went to Baba at Shirdi. There, on two days, he took away as dakshina, the entire amount and we had to give up all idea of pilgrimage to other places. Evidently, Baba wanted us to feel that Shirdi was pandharpur and all other holy places put together. 'At the feet of the Sat Purusha are all holy tirthas'. Then after all our money had been taken, Baba gave us leave to go. Then I told my friends of Shirdi that I could not go as I had no fund. They said that after Baba gave leave, it was wrong to stay on. Then suddenly, Mr. Toser came and got for me a loan from some one, the amount required. My feeling in paying dakshina to Baba was that as he was feeding and helping so many fakirs, poor people etc., money given to him was good charity.

One effect of my contact with Baba is that I got premonition of coming evils and courage to face them when they come.