

I
18TH OCTOBER, 1936

4 P.M

W.Pradhan, B.A., L.L.B High Court Pleader & J.P. aged 56, residing at Sai Baugh, Santa Cruz, says:

Nana Saheb Chandorkar was the cause of all my relations going to Baba and therefore the cause of my going also. It was the first week of May 1910. A group of my brothers and other relations were chatting with Mr. Chandorkar. Then my brother Rama Rao asked "Is there any one nowadays of the type of Akkalkote Maharaj?"

N.C:

Do you want to see one?

R.R:

Yes

N.C.:

In that case, go to Shirdi. In Sai Baba of Shirdi you have one.

R.R.

This is the first time we hear of Shirdi. Where is it and how do we get to it.

N.C.

It is in Kopergaon Taluk, Ahmednagar District. You have to go to Kopergaon Station (on Dhond Manmad Line) and take a *tonga*. Shirdi is 11 miles off the station.

Mr.Chandorkar gave such a vivid and glowing account of Baba's power, personality, kindness and greatness that all his hearers were aglow with the desire to rush at once or as early as possible to Shirdi and have *darsan* (sight) of Baba. These relations and friends of mine, forming a group of about 10 or 14 people started the very next day to Shirdi. They wanted me to be with the party. But I had been out and they left word with my wife and went away. I was that day with my mother who told me of their trip to see Baba; but I, in my ignorance, said to her "Who can say, if he is really genuine saint?"

When the party returned from Shirdi, I took a loan from my brother of two things that they had brought, a copy of Baba's picture and chapter 31 of Bhakta Lilamrita of Das Ganu, describing Baba's life and the miracles he wrote, promising to return them the same day. I took them home showed them to my wife, and began to read aloud that Chapter 31 to her. The effect was deep and electric. All the doubt that I had expressed to my mother vanished. I was converted. From that moment I got a firm belief that Baba was a true and great saint if ever there was one. My wife's faith was even greater. I told her that the book and the picture had to be returned that day. But she could not think of Parting with Baba and that too on a Thursday. So at her insistence I kept them on, even the next day and the third. Then as they were called for by my brother, I had to return them on the fourth day.

Now we were burning with a desire to go to Baba. But circumstances seemed to be adverse to any such adventure. My sister-in-law who had been recently widowed, appeared to be in advanced pregnancy and had no son. We all fervently hoped she would have a son and I, as the only male member in the house, could not leave the town as the delivery might take place any day.

But my wife and sister were very anxious that I should not lose the chance of seeing Baba early. So I started about a fortnight after the first party returned from Shirdi by the end of May 1910. By the kindness of Mr.Chandorkar, his two sons Babu and Bapu became my companions. At starting I had provided myself with three or four gold sovereigns (guineas, as they were called) and some notes. I got a note changed with the object that I might be able to give silver rupees when Baba should ask for *dakshina*. I had 20 rupees in cash and the rest in notes. Thus provided, I went to Shirdi. After a good reception at Kopergaon from the Mamlatdar and a good bath at the Godavari, we reached Shirdi. There at that very moment of our arrival, Baba was standing at the Lendi, as though he was waiting for us. So we at once got down and bowed to him. We put up at the Sathewada and there had the company of Rao Bahadur Sathe, Mr. Noolkar, 1st class Sub-Judge etc. Soon after, I took all the flowers, garlands, fruits etc., I had brought to the Masjid

to garland Baba and gave him all the presents. When I looked quietly into his face and eyes, I felt confirmed in my impression that Baba is a really great saint and said within myself "Thank God. I am come". This deep impression was quite opportune. Baba at once proceeded to put my faith to the test.

Baba asked me for a Dakshina. Instead of giving him silver as I had intended when I changed the notes at Kalyan, I gave him gold. I put a sovereign in his hand. Baba received it, turned it in his palms now with St. George's figure upwards, again with the written side upwards. He did so thrice and asked Noolkar each time, "What is this?" Noolkar replied "Baba, this is a guinea". Baba then asked him "What is it worth?" and he replied "It is worth fifteen rupees". Then Baba returned the coin to me saying "I do not want this. Keep it and give me fifteen rupees". Then Baba returned the coin to me saying "I do not want this keep it and give me fifteen rupees." I put the coin into my purse. But Noolkar was anxious that I should not mix up the coin touched and returned by Baba, with other coins and asked me to keep it apart as a sacred possession. Of course I did so. I then gave Baba fifteen silver rupees. Then Baba took the fifteen, counted them over and over and professed to find only ten rupees in what I gave and said "here is only Rs.10. Give me 5 more." This was really testing my faith in him. A lawyer accustomed to combat and criticise would naturally defend himself against the aspersion that he gave only ten when asserting that he paid a larger sum. But my faith had come up to the mark. I meekly accepted Baba's declaration and without any inclination to dispute Baba's words gladly gave him the other 5 rupees in my pocket. Baba was obviously aware that the 20 rupees in my pocket was intended for him and expressly got to be paid to him and under colour of wrong calculation was carrying out my intention to place that sum at his feet. After I gave him the 20 rupees on that occasion he did not ask for more, though I had a lot more in notes with me. Then I left him.

When I went to him next, he was giving *udhi* to a number of devotees crowding round him. He caught sight of me as I stood at a distance, beckoned to me to draw near, addressed me as Bhavu (as he did ever afterwards) and said "It will be alright in 2 or 4 days." Then he gave me *udhi* and I left the mosque. Persons who were present and wondered at

such deep interest of Baba in me and his regard for me, like Mr.Noolkar and Mrs.Jog came to me. Noolkar embrace me. Mrs Jog wanted to know from me what sacred reading I went on with (to find out how I should deserve the marked treatment accorded to me by Baba). Baba, every one knew, did not care for mere wealth, gold or family position. I humbly admitted to Mr.Jog that I could boast of little sacred study, *Pothi* etc.

I thought I would return by the next day. But when leave was, Baba declined it in his characteristic fashion by saying, “Go tomorrow”. He did so on succeeding days and kept me there for eight days. I was arranging for a special dinner or *Biksha* to Baba the next day and requested him to inform me who were to be invited and what the menu was to be. Of course, *Puranpoli* was to be the crown of the dinner and for quests, he said I was to invite Babu (the nephew of Dada Kelkar), who was Baba’s favourite and Baba. He said ‘I also will come’ ‘mihiye innu’ before I invited him. The next day the dinner was prepared as directed and plates were served. Babu was invited and sat at one plate. Another was served and set apart for Baba. A crow came and lifted a puranpoli off the plate and carried it away. All hailed it with delight as evidence that Baba was going in the form to take away his own.

The afternoon, Baba touched his limbs on one side and said, “On this side of my body, there is excruciating pain”. But he added “It will be alright in 2 or 4 days.” Baba really appeared healthy, inspite of those words and what he meant to convey by his words escaped our powers of understanding at that time.

On a Thursday, during that period Baba was preparing food in “*Handi*” (i.e.,pot) to feed large numbers. He drove away every one from the masjid and was alone with his *handi*. At that time, to the great surprise and alarm of the spectators, my self and the two sons of Chandorkar went in. Baba far from being angry, received us very well, as though he had intended the expulsion of others for the very purpose of granting us a wholly private interview. Then after a little while Baba appeared to be singing out something. At least I thought it to be so. But I found that when he repeated the

words for the third time, they were. At on "kayare apala kayahmanave Sriram jayaram jaya jayaram." At once, on hearing these words I was overcome with emotion and I placed my head on Baba's feet and tears flowed freely. These words were the guru *mantra* that I had received from my family guru Haribua (whose grandfather Atmaram Bua who has a temple built for his worship Thakurdwar Bombay, was the guru of my great grandfather). And Baba was so kindly reviving my interest in and regard for that guru mantra in this fashion for my benefit. Baba was attending to my spiritual benefit without any question from me and his loving interest in me was too deep for me to return and too great to acknowledge except through tears of gratitude and joy. At the "handi", I noticed with wonder that when the contents of the cauldron were boiling, Baba used his own bare palm and not a spoon nor a ladle to stir the contents thoroughly to secure even and uniform consistency in the food or *sira*. His hand was not scalded or swollen by such use. Thence suddenly at noon, he took us three to the Lendi, a very unusual hour for him to visit the Lendi; and there he dug into the earth small hollows, gave me some corn and made me sow that corn in those hollows. Then after turning up some earth to cover the seeds, he made me water the patches sown; and then we returned to the mosque. It is that lendi garden which 7 or 8 years later (i.e., immediately after he passed away) I have purchased.

After detaining us for a week, Baba gave us permission to go away. At that time Babu Chandorkar placed a plate under Baba's feet and pouring water on them collected the water to be used at home. That was departure in the traditions of Shirdi. Till then only *udhi* was allowed to be taken away, and *Pada Tirtha* was immediately used up at the *Arathi* or at any rate at Shirdi. I took my cue from Babu and took Baba's *Padatirtha* home for the use of my mother and others. On our way, at Manmad we had only 3rd class tickets; and under the Railway rules then obtaining, we could only board a later train but not the Punjab Mail. But by a happy thought we rushed in and contrary to the rules, got into that mail and reached home 4 or 5 hours earlier than if we had conformed to the rules. These 4 or 5 hours I discovered were specially valuable and it was obviously Baba's

grace that enabled us to be so early. As soon as I reached home, I learnt that my mother had an attack of paralysis. She was having the attack of hemiplegia in our house at Bombay, when Baba was saying "My side is giving me excruciating pain." Doctors had been brought in. My sister and other relations were in discussion if I should be informed at Shirdi about the event. Mr.Chandorkar who was then present, remarked, it seems, that it was needless and that everything would be safe for my mother so long as I stayed with Baba and that Baba would himself send me back, if and when there was need. On the night when we were starting from Shirdi the attendant doctor noting the high temperature, the constricted state of the bowels and her restlessness declared that her condition was critical and that if however the bowels should move in the course of the night the situation would be more hopeful. It was that very night about 4.30 or 5 a.m. I reached my mother's place. At once I gave her Baba's udhi and *tirtha*. She then went somnolent and sometime later, her bowels moved and consequently her temperature fell. The doctor came and found that there was improvement and that things had taken a favourable turn. Quite obviously our timely dismissal from Shirdi, with Baba's tirtha and udhi, our timely catching the Punjab Mail and arrival on the critical night were all seen or foreseen and willed by Baba and the favourable turn was what he intended and foretold when he said to me at Shirdi "in 2 or 4 days it will be alright". Truly.

Sai moves in mysterious way.

His wonders to perform.

My mother recovered full health soon and lived four years thereafter. Two years before her death, she went to Shirdi and had Baba's darsan and blessing.

Without exception all members of my family go to Baba and get his blessing. I shall mention how my wife and sister got to Baba and how my wife got a special blessing from Baba.

One night, Das Ganu Mahraj performed his splendid *Kirtan* (always in praise of Baba, whatever the main and express theme of his kirtan may be) at my mother's place. Then I invited him and Mr.Chandorkar and all the friends then present to go over to Santa Cruz for rest. They all came

with the entire musical accompaniments and set. It was suggested that they should proceed with a fresh kirtan here at my house. That went on from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. the most impressionable hours of the night. My wife listening to the kirtan got a burning desire to visit Shirdi. Baba came to her in a dream she told me; and this considered as a sufficient indication that she should be taken to Shirdi. "But what of my or sister-in-law, who still seemed to be in advanced pregnancy?" I thought over it. My wife and sister-in-law were prepared to take risk of labour pains on route. I engaged a special second class railway car, paying the price of 12 tickets and arranged that the same car should be taken on via Manmad to Kopergaon and taken off to a lay-by there. We all started and throughout the journey there was not the least trouble. When we were nearing Kopergaon, my wife said that Mr. Chandorkar would perhaps be at the station to receive us. I replied that it was impossible, though I had intimated our starting to him. Yet strangely that very thing happened.

Mr. Chandorkar had gone to Shirdi on account of his ill health. He was getting fever every alternated day and the day of our arrival was the day on which he would get fever in the usual course. Yet he got my letter and asked Baba for permission to receive us at Kopergaon. Baba gave it readily. When H.S.Dixit objected and went to Baba mentioning the alternate day's fever as a reason why he should go to Kopergaon instead of Chandorkar, Baba gruffly sent him back and said that Chandorkar, and Chandorkar alone, should go. Mr.Chandorkar came and made grand and excellent arrangements for our reception and for the comfort of the ladies and all our holy baths at Godavari; and we all reached Shirdi safely. Mr.Chandorkar was not a whit the worse for his journey and was free from fever. His fever then left him for good.

On the day we reached Shirdi, Baba said to Madhava Rao Deshpande, pointing to my wife "This is the mother of my Babu"*.

Mr. Chandorkar thought it must refer obviously to my sister-in-law who was believed to be pregnant and asked Baba, pointing to my sister-in-law. "This is the lady, is it not?" Baba replied "No, It is this" and he again pointed to my wife.

Exactly twelve months from that date my wife was delivered of a male child and we have named that son "Babu" (the name used by Baba). At the "Christening" Das Ganu, Mr.Chandorkar and all were present and it was a grand and joyous occasion reminding us of Baba's kindness and greatness.

At my first visit there was severe storm and rain for quarter of an hour when I was with Baba at the masjid. I then thought that if the rains beat like the streams would swell and getting back to my place at Bombay would be difficult and Baba would not grant me early leave to go away. Baba then looked at the sky and said.

Are Alla abhibarasath poora kara. mere balabachhe ghar janevale hai. unko sukhse janede.

"Oh God! Enough, stop the rain. My children have to go back home. Let them go back without difficulty". As he spoke, the rains became gentler and feebler. I felt that Baba knew my inner most thoughts. Then he gave me leave to go and I caught the Punjab Mail and took *Udhi* and *tirtha* to my mother as stated above. III(IV) 359. The night after my return my sister-in-law dreamt that a fakir robed in a *Kupni* and wearing a towel on his head was in our house. This I felt was proving what Baba said "I will accompany you home", Baba is in our house.

