

XXIV

9th march, 1938.

Madhav Rao Deshpande alias Shama, Brahmin, aged about 80, Dixit Wada, Shirdi.

Upasani Baba when he came to Shirdi first was sleeping and boarding here. He was still unwell. He cried in his sleep, "I am dead," and he asked me to request Sai baba to help him. I told Sai Baba that Upasani Sastri was expecting death and getting frightened. Sai Baba replied maranakunaitaranakuye jaga that this place Shirdi is for saving and not killing people. At first I (like others) took Upasani Maharaj for a detective. But he assured me he was not one. Sai Baba at the first visit asked him to stay on or return within eight days. Upasani did not agree and pleaded distance from Dhulia, etc., as his reasons. Finally he put up in this (Deekshit) Wada for 21 years. Sai Baba told him to remain four years in Khandoba temple, and promised him Khandoba's grace at the end of that term. This was said by Baba about 15 days after his second arrival. G.S.Khaporde held his reading classes down-

stairs. Upasani Sastri, etc., attended it. Upasani Sastri would spend much of his nights in talk upstairs, when he lived at Khandoba's.

Sai baba's statement that he was four years younger than myself cannot be understood as relating to this life. He looked my senior in point of age. He told me of my relations with him in previous births. Once he said to me "You and I were living in the same lane, in a former birth." The little girl of three Santi Kirvandikar who fell into a well and was upheld by Baba's hand, slowly left in the water and thus saved from any hurt by Baba's grace and who called herself sister of Baba is now alive. Her father Baba Kirvandikar (now dead) was then living here. When she fell into the well, H.S.Dixit, G.M.Buty: etc, were here. That might be about 1915. She is married and is now living with her husband at Malegaon, which is 30 miles off Manmad.

I was an Assistant teacher in a school which was located in the place where Baba's horse is now stabled. A window of that always looked on the adjoining mosque. Through that I occasionally watched Sai baba who was taken by people to be a mad fakir. I had no regard for him then. I remained a teacher five or six years. I gave up the place, as I was transferred. Ganu Master then took my place. Nana Ratna Parkhe was my Headmaster and superior. One Laxman Master was another teacher above me. Our family belonged to Nimon, where I was born. But my father came and settled here, when I was two years old. Ever since, I have continued here. I studied here. After resigning my place, I used to visit Sai baba off and on. In five or six months thereafter, I was convinced that Sai Baba was God. How my faith grew even when I was a teacher. I shall mention. I used to sleep in the school. Baba was the sole occupant of the mosque. Yet I could hear English, Hindi, many languages being spoken in the mosque (at night) evidently by Baba. I inferred that he had remarkable powers and began to have faith in him.

When I was still at School, Chidambar Keshav Gadgil came to Shirdi and asked me. "It is said a great sādhu is here. Where is he?" I replied that there was none at Shirdi and from the school I pointed to the mosque and told him. "There is only this mad Fakir." Mr.Gadgil went to the

mosque. Sai Baba showered abuse on him. But the abuse was productive of faith and joy. Gadgil had worshipped or paid his respects to a saint living at Bhima Shankar temple at Poona. That saint had asked him to go and see the saint at Shirdi. That was why he had come to Shirdi. Now Sai in his abuse referred to that and Gadgil felt sure that Baba was a Gnani, a great saint. Thence forward he frequently visited Baba and became his staunch devotee. At the first visit of Mr. Gadgil he was a Chitnis, and with him came Vaman, a special Munisiff, and Sitaram Patwardhan, an Educational Officer, and a *tongawalla*. I went with these up to the steps of the Mosque, Baba forbade us from climbing the steps and began his shower of abuse. Therein he said "I am a Moslem. Go and fall at the feet of the sādhu at Bhimashankar temple, etc."

Ananda swami (Andandanath is not the correct name) was a devotee of Akkalkote Maharaj (who passed away about 1878) and had established a mutt at Savargaon (6 miles off Yeola) where he lived. He was about 95 years old in 1885 when I and Nandram Marwadi etc., went to see him, at his mutt. He wore only a *langoti* and was a great *Sakshatkari*. At the close of our visit Anandaswami came with us to Shirdi to see Sai Baba. Sai Baba and he saw each other but exchanged no words. Thereafter Anandaswami returned and told us his opinion of Sri Sai in these words "here is a diamond on a dung hill." Bala Chopdar (now aged 60) was then aged only 7 years.

Gangagir came to Shirdi and conducted grand Saptha repeating with numerous people mantras etc., for 7 days with Homa and fed large numbers, at the close of the Saptaha. He did so only once. That was long after Anandaswami's visit. Gangagir also saw Sai Baba and expressed his very high opinion of Baba.

Nana Saheb Nimonkar, was older than myself by atleast 5 or 6 years.

I shall recite Baba's strange goat purchase. Once a man had a number of goats with him. Two of his goats were worth about Rs.4/- each. Baba went to him, paid 32 Rupees for them and bought them. I and Tatyapa Patel learning the price Baba had paid said that in the bargain Baba had been duped, as the goats were worth only 4 Rs. each. Baba then

got pulses etc., for about 11/2 Rs. and fed the goats with the pulses. Then he explained why he acted like this. He found he said that the goats were looking at him entreatingly. Then Baba notice them. They were in their previous birth two women that had served Baba. But they were fiercely quarrelling with each other and had killed each other. They took birth as goats. Baba then went and returned the goats to their owner.

Pishya was a Rohilla. Many Rohillas came here in Baba's time. At Neemgoan there were the landlords, Baba Saheb Dengle and his younger brother Nana Saheb Dengle. Neither of them was an official. But they had much influence with officials. Nana Saheb Dengle came to Baba when I was a teacher at the school.

When Nana Saheb Nimonkar was staying at Shirdi, his son and daughter-in-law at Poona were attacked by plague. Mrs. and Mr.N wanted permission to go to Poona. Baba did not grant permission. Mrs.N. then wept. Baba said to her "Why do you cry? In 15 days' time your son will come here." Accordingly the son and his wife recovered and the son came to Shirdi within the period fixed by Baba.

Sai Baba enabled people to escape the clutches of death in such "*gandas*". Compare this with the way in which Samarth Ramdas enabled one to escape such a *Ganda*. At a particular time death was to seize a devotee. But Ramdas told the latter to remain by his side and be vigorously holding on to the feet of Ramdas. The appointed time came and passed away. Death had been kept at bay by Ramdas, and his devotee escaped death on that occasion.

Nana Wali was 70 years old at the time of his death, He was *Gurubandhu* of Yeshwantrao, the departed Dev mamlatdar of Nasik.

When our Nana Wali came, he was old. Baba encouraged him and said Nana kulup laga diya killi tere pas hai. nereku daganai denga. Mai daga nai denga. Nana wali was a *Sakshikari* Purusha, who had thorough *Vairagya*. He ate pig's filth. He kept scorpions in his mouth and also yakuli and. unner. Once he spat the unner Wali on Sai Baba. He wore no sacred thread.

On the day Baba passed away, Nana Wali declared "I will clear Off" and he died some days thereafter.

