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11th June, 1936

Chinna Kistna Rajasaheb Bahadur, B.A., L.L.B., Saraswath aged about 50, interior of India, says:

I look upon Sri Sai Baba as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. I did so before his Mahasamadhi in 1918 and I do so now. To me, he is not gone. He is, even now.

To me, he had no limitations. Of course, when he was with us, there was the fleshy tabernacle. That was prominently brought to our notice at times. But mostly the infinite aspect of His was what remained before me. I thought of him as a mental or spiritual image, in which the finite blended very perfectly - yet allowing the finite to appear before us at times. Now that the body has been cast off, the infinite alone remains, as 'Sai Baba'.

I am not after metaphysics and philosophical conundrums. Sai Baba occasionally talked in mystic language and used parables freely - which however, were constructed in widely different ways by different listeners. Once he talked to me in the mystic way and asked me whether I understood him. I said 'No'. Others were present then. After they left, I told him that I did not grasp mystic utterances and that if he intended that I should grasp anything he should speak to me in plain terms. After that he spoke to me only in plain words and not in parables.

A short account of myself is necessary to show how I came to Sai Baba and how he filled my life and became my all in all.

Our family God is Durga - Santa Durga of Goa- a Bhadra form and not a Rudra form. I used to worship her and pray that she might ever keep me happy. Later when I was about eight years old, I had my sacred thread initiation and learnt my *Gayatri* and *Sandhya*. These I had regard for.

I was thus naturally led on from Durga to another form of God i.e., Narayana or Vishnu. Vishnu as pictured in “Dhruva-Narayana” made a deep impression on me, and I constantly meditated on that picture. When I concentrated or tried to concentrate on Vishnu, Dhruva’s figure frequently obtruded and so I cut off that portion of the picture and continued my meditation. I made a special appeal that in that blank space in the picture. (i.e., in that vacancy) Vishnu should place me. I had even as a boy practised Asana and Pranayama. I could pass one or two hours sitting in Padmasana or Siddhasana and concentrate for at least fifteen minutes, a single picture holding the entire field of my attention. I did all this without a Guru. I succeeded in Pranayama also to some extent. In this way my meditation on Vishnu or Narayana was fairly intense. This continued till my twenty first year. Then (i.e., 1910) one day, I was either sleeping and had dreams or I had trance visions I cannot say what they were. But the following three experiences I had in the course of one night.

As I was in the lying posture on my bed, I felt a change. I was perceiving that the body lay separate and I was disengaged from it - disconnected or unconnected. I was different from the body; and in front of me stood the figure of Vishnu Narayana. This ended; and about an hour later, a second incident followed. Again my body lay there on the bed. I was outside it. Sri Vishnu Narayana was standing before me and by his side stood another figure. Sri Vishnu addressed me and pointing to the other figure said “This Sai Baba of Shirdi, is you man; you must resort to him”.

The third incident or vision followed soon after- after about the same interval perhaps. I felt I was moving in some strange way. It was like levitation in the air. I came or was carried thus to a village. I found some one there and asked him what village that was. He said it was Shirdi, I asked him, “Is there any person named ‘Sai Baba’ here?” “Yes” he answered, “come and see”. I was taken to the mosque. There I saw Sai Baba. He was seated with legs outstretched. I went and reverently placed my head on his feet. He got up and said “Do you take my darshan? I am your debtor, I must take your darshan,” and he placed his head on my feet. Then we parted.

These visions impressed me greatly. Before that time I had seen a picture of Sai Baba in the usual seated posture and I knew nothing more about him. I did not then know that Baba often sat with both legs outstretched. Some time later, I started on my first visit to Baba and Shirdi, and tried to verify my visions and to see if Sai Baba was my destined sole Guru as indicated in them.

When I went to Sai Baba at the mosque, there were many others with him. I went and prostrated, placing my head on his feet. He then said "What! Do you worship a man?" At once I retreated some distance and sat. I felt the rebuff very keenly. I had, it is true, my scholastic notions that men should not be worshipped; and thought Sai Baba was hitting at me for going to him, with such notions lingering in my head. Between two stools I was coming to the ground. My scholastic idea of not worshipping any human being had been undermined and practically sacrificed; but I had not been accepted as a devotee by the Guru as I expected- from my visions. I felt deeply mortified and continued to sit for some hours. Then all had cleared of, leaving Baba alone on the floor of the mosque. That was in the afternoon. It was believed that none should go to Baba at that time, lest any serious harm should be inflicted as a penalty for the intrusion. But in my state of mind, such harm did not deter me. The main or single hope with which I had gone to Shirdi seemed to be blasted. What more was there to fear? He might beat me and crack my skull. Let him. With such ideas, I went nearer and nearer to the place where Baba sat. While I was some yards off, Baba gently beckoned to me to approach him. Thus encouraged I went and placed my head on his feet. He at once hugged me, bade me sit close to him and thus addressed me, "You are my child. When others i.e., strangers are in the company, we keep the children off". My apparent rejection or expulsion earlier in the day having been thus satisfactorily explained, I felt the full force of his deep and intense love for me and my heart responded to it. There was my Saviour, my Guru-the man of my destiny, found at last. Baba told me to go and put up with "Ayi". "Radhakrishnan" as he called her. I went up. Ever since that date, up to the end of her life, whenever I went to Shirdi, Ayi's was my residence. And except to go to Sai Baba, I would never leave

Ayi's residence while I was at Shirdi.

Ayi was a noble and affectionate person- an "Ayi" or mother indeed. She was from the very first treated by me as my mother and she loved me as if I was her son. She used to get a *roti* (bread) from Baba as prasad - on which alone she was living; and Baba used to send her an additional roti for me. Sometimes the extra roti received at Ayi's would indicated to her that I was on the way to Shirdi and would soon arrive. Ayi's devotion to Sai Baba was very intense and passionate. She lived only for Sai Baba, and her delight was to carry out everything that he wanted or was needed for his Sansthan, i.e., institution and devotees. I find that Baba's instruction and help to me came through Ayi, in a peculiar way. Ayi was so open hearted and kind that from the first day I could confide all my views and plans to her; and she revealed her ideas and plans to me. As for religious progress, she said that we should so act that no other persons should guess what we were doing and how we were getting on. Secrecy is essential for the success or perfect fruition of spiritual effort. This was, of course, Baba's practice and precept*.

As for religious exercise, Ayi was an excellent singer with a divinely charming voice and a good knowledge of music. She could play on the Sitar also. I had a good ear for music and I easily attained *manolaya*+. I was rapt in the music when I listened to it. But as we went on, one day we talked about what form our religious exercise should take. Songs and hymns were good in their way, but they attracted attention of the outside public too much, and were not in any case sufficient for our onward course. Then we agreed that Japa was the proper step for us. What particular name should be used by us for Japa was the important question. She said that many used the name of Vittal, Ram etc., but that so far as she was concerned, "Sai" was her God and that

name was sufficient for her, while I might go on with the name of Vittal, etc., if I choose. I replied that I had not seen Vittal: and what was good for her was good for me, and that I also would go on taking Sai's name. So we sat on, facing each other and repeating to ourselves our chosen (guru God's) name- for about an hour. Later in the day, Sai Baba sent for me and asked me what I had been doing in the morning. "Japa" I said. "Of what name?" He asked. "Of my God" I replied. "What is your God?" was Sai Baba's next query. I simply replied, "you know it," and he smiled and said "That is right". Thus this Japa was really the Japa that he expressly approved and had perhaps silently started through Ayi unperceived by either Ayi or myself. Japa being the Sadhana approved of (in my case), the question may be put what is the *Sadhya* or goal that Sai Baba approved of- as the goal of life? What should a man aim at and reach as the end of his life? Just as the Sadhana was indirectly started by Baba, the Sadhya or goal, also was indirectly revealed; it was patent from all he said and did. It was through love, to reach God, (in any form, especially in the beloved form of the loving Guru) and intensely, nay passionately, to love him. This is what we did and what he made us to do, i.e., what he enabled or drew us to do by his own intense and wonderful love for us.

Some may set a great store by *Sakshatkara* or revelation in physical form of the object of worship, as the be- all and end-all of all religion. But I do not. As I intently meditated on Baba, I had Baba's vision at the meditation, I however, treated that appearance as a matter of secondary or minor importance. I did not want Baba to be outside of me. I said to Baba that I wanted him to come in and be me. What I mean by "me" is this. The self (i.e., "I") is compounded of two substances one the gross body and the other, the finer or subtler. In the finer, we have the baser element or part, and the nobler or higher. Our self, God Vittal and other entities are all the reflections of the Real; and so I should rise up to be Vittal or Sai; Vittal or Sai should come into me and take the place of my higher part. That is what I wanted to arrive at- and so was not satisfied with seeing Sai Baba as external to me in my meditation or contemplation.

I have not regularly studied even Gita up to this time. I did not care for spiritual study in my earlier days either; and so I do not go into much detail on the question of the exact description of the further stages or final stage of meditation.

One *Gurupoornima* day, numerous devotees came to Sai Baba, and as usual, placed a book before him so that he might return it with his *Asirvada* or blessing for them to study it with profit and benefit. Sai Baba, however, took up a book brought by one man and gave it to another, as he often does. On that occasion every one had a book in hand, except myself. Baba then looked at me and said pointing to the books- In these books, they want to find God Brahma. There is however, Brahma, i.e. whirl, confusion or delusion in these books. You are alright. Do not read books but keep me in your heart. If you unify (or harmonise) head and heart, that is enough". So I have not been indulging in any regular study of religious books. I content myself with what has led me so far; and with what has been achieved.) Some of my experiences bear upon the question what I should do. Though I have been intensely loving Sri Sai, I have not been able at time to do as good service to Baba as others do.

It was probably in 1912 that I went up to Shirdi on some festive occasion (Guru Poornima?) I saw the devotees at Manmad having each a grand basket with flower garlands etc. I was much pained to note that I had forgotten to take a flower garland when I was going to my Guru, who was everything to me. We all went to Shirdi and at the mosque, I found Baba was under a great weight of flower garlands and it pained me again that I had not a garland to give him. Baba lifted up a bundle of the garlands with his hand and said "All these are yours". How kind of Baba! What love was his to me! all forgiving, all forgetting love.

About the same year 1912, I had taken Rs.100 with me to Shirdi in my pocket. Sai Baba asked me for dakshina (Rs.40). I readily gave it. A little later he asked for another 40 rupees and that too was given with equal readiness and joy. Finally he asked me for the remaining 20 and that also I gave him. I was happy to give him all that - though I was left without a pie in the result. Then again Baba sent for me and

asked me for dakshina. I said I had nothing to give. Then he suggested that I should go and get money from some others. I agreed but told Baba that if he should indicate whom I was to go to, I would gladly go and ask him. Baba said "Go to Shama". I went to Mr. Madhava Rao Deshpande (Shama) and told him what took place and asked him for money. He replied that I had not understood Baba right. "Does Baba care a rap for your rupees?" He said "No, what he wants is your mind and heart, your time and soul to be devoted to him. That is his meaning". I went back to Baba and reported what Shama had said. Then Baba smiled and said, "Go to Dixit and ask him." I went to Mr. Dixit and told him of what Baba had bidden me to do. He then replied that Baba's direction to me had to be understood in the circumstances as a lesson to me that I should not feel absence of money or the begging for money or for anything else to be a humiliation, and that I should not esteem myself to be above begging. I went back and reported Dixit's reply to Baba. He smiled and then asked me to go to Nana Saheb Chandorkar and ask him for a loan. I went to Khandoba's temple where Nana Saheb Chandorkar was reading some religious books with the learned K. Upasani Sastri. I went and told Nana Saheb all that had occurred and Baba's order that I should approach him for money. Nana Saheb at once showed his worldly wisdom. He said that he knew how delicate the situation was when Baba asked for dakshina and there was nothing to be given to him to satisfy him and that I should learn his plans and was. "Whenever I go to Shirdi", he said, "I start with a certain sum, and leave a half at Kopergaon, i.e. on this occasion I came with Rs.200 out of which I have left Rs.100 at Kopergaon and come down to Shirdi with only Rs.100. It is very painful to say 'No' when Baba asks for money. So I go on giving dakshina out of the stock in hand to Baba and when it is exhausted, I send for the reserve at Kopergaon. You must act like this". I went back to Baba and then told him what Nana said. While I sat there. Baba sent for Nana and asked him for dakshina Rs.40. He paid it and went away. Again he sent for him and asked for Rs.40 more. That was paid and again Nana was sent for and the last amount was paid up and at once he sent some one to Kopergaon for his reserve fund. Then Baba at once wanted more. Nana felt humiliated

at having to say 'No' as there was no time for the Kopergaon reserve to arrive. The lesson that then taught to him, to me, and to all was that it was presumption on the part of any one to think that he himself was the great Providence supplying the needs of Baba, or that any one could supply all that Baba might ask for. Thus Baba showed me how differently the demand for dakshina was interpreted by devotees. The real explanation of Baba's demand in this case was not what Shama, Dixit or Nana said it was. It was evidently to teach lessons to me, Nana etc. Baba really cared nothing for money or for presents. What he really wanted was, love- deep, intense, passionate, wholehearted love. To give him that was my aim. He knew it and read it in my heart and responded to it- as only he could respond.

It was probably in 1915 Ramanavami, when intending to go to Shirdi, I went into the Indore cloth bazar to fix upon a present- worthy of being presented to Baba. I found a fine lace embroidered muslin of the Dacca type, produced at Chander. It was some 5 feet square with embroidered body and 8 or 9 inches of lace border all round. It was very nice and worth the 85 rupees I paid for it. It could be folded into 6"x6"x1" packet. I took it with me to Shirdi and kept it inside my shirt. Devotees usually go and present Baba with cloth in order that the same may be returned to them with Baba's blessings; and the same is returned to them. In my case, I had made up my mind that if Baba cared for my love (which knew no difference between him and me) he should not return the same to me but should retain it and wear it. When each devotee went and presented his cloth, it would be openly bestowed and placed on Baba and then at the end, the attendants would call out, "Whose is this" and return it. In order to avoid the return, I had taken my tiny packet and when I bowed to Baba, I slyly shoved the packet under his mattress (gadi). When all clothes were taken and returned, none noticed what was beneath the gadi. Baba then got up and said "Clear off all that lies on the gadi and dust it". When the mattress was removed, there was the muslin packet. Baba picked it up and said "Hallo, what is this? Muslin!" And spread it out and said "I am not going to return this. This is mine". He then put it round his body and said to me "Don't I look nice in this?" I was immensely happy as his

loving heart had fulfilled my request for the acceptance and retention of the present- as an index of the fact that I was not different from him- that I and he were one. I was not different from him. I and he were really one.

Our unity was expressly granted, in another way and at another time by Baba- about the same year.

I had gone to Shirdi and was staying as usual at Ayi's. In the afternoon, when Baba was alone, he sent some one to fetch me and after dismissing the messenger from his presence, he was very kind to me, made me sit close to him, embraced me, and said "The key of my treasury is now placed in your hands. Ask anything you want, e.g., Rs.5 or Rs.100 a month- or what you like and I will give it to you". I felt at once that this was a temptation- and declined to ask for anything. Sai Baba knew what was necessary, good or useful for me and it was for him to decide and give or withhold. It was not for me to ask. Seeing my disinclination to ask, he held me by the chin and coaxed me into asking him for something. Then I asked, "Is it agreed Baba, that you will grant anything I ask for?" "Yes" was his answer. "Then Baba," I replied, "I want this. In this and in any future birth that may befall on me you should never part from me. You should always be with me." And he patted me joyously and said, "Yes I shall be with you, inside you, and outside you, whatever you may be or do." I was supremely happy. I feel that he is always with me. At times, he visibly shows his form to reassure me or guide me.

Many years later, I lost a child in a building which had numerous occupants. My wife was greatly depressed and started weeping. I assured her that Baba did only what was good for us and had taken away that child and so we should not weep and attract a crowd. I asked her to sleep till morning- when the funeral would take place. She could not bear the sight of the corpse, and so I took it on myself and she went to lie down. Then when I had the corpse on my lap Baba appeared to me, took me and said "Do you want me or the dead child? Choose. You cannot have both. If you want me to revive the child, I will; but then you will have me no more with you. If you do not want revival you will have many children in due course." I had no hesitation in telling him that I wanted him. "Then do not grieve" he said and

vanished. It is thus he encourages me when the occasion needs it, even by his presence. All my needs are met by Baba's grace. I do not trouble him with prayers for my worldly gains or support. I have my income and property and insurance and I am content with the provision for the present and future. If any need arises, I find that somehow the money comes up. I have nothing to complain of. Finally if I am asked what I would suggest to one who wished to find out how he (not having met Sai Baba in the flesh) could make himself a devotee of Sai Baba and get his help- my answer will be that he should sit wholeheartedly and try to pour his heart in love to Sai Baba. It is not essential that he should go to Shirdi for that purpose- though Shirdi associations are undoubtedly helpful. All that he should do is to transcend the senses and concentrate with love on Sai Baba. He would surely reach and obtain the help of Sai Baba- to obtain all that he is fit to achieve or receive.

Baba does not prescribe one uniform spiritual exercise or practice for all. He suits himself to the stage, circumstances and conditions of each- "If you are a Rama Bhakta, keep to Rama. If you want only Allah, keep to Allah" is his advice. He is always impartial. Sometimes he pronounced or got some to pronounce '*fatiah*' over Hindu offerings also. There was a rule no sharp distinction or antagonism between Hindus, devotion to him and Mohammedans' devotion to him. There were, however, some exceptions. One I will mention. There were two "*Rohillas*" about 1916 who came to Shirdi and became devoted to Sai Baba. The elder one was constantly with Baba and used to read the Koran, at night especially, sitting at the feet of Baba. He declared that Baba was *paygambar* (i.e. God) and showed him great reverence. At times he said that Baba (though he was Paygambar) was still teaching heterodox doctrine. Baba's allowing the din of noon day Arati with its music in the mosque, allowing himself to be worshipped as God there, and partaking of food offered to idols were heterodox; and this *Rohilla* mentioned his objections to Baba. But Baba only smiled and said "All that (i.e., other Gods) is Allah." This was one of Baba's moods. In some moods, he would say "We are all the creations of God 'Allah'. In other moods he would say I am God". This, of course, was extreme heterodoxy in this Rohilla's view. So

this Rohilla one day declared that, although Sai Baba was Paygambar, yet his doctrine was wrong and so he (the Rohilla) would make short work of him and his Doctrine. One day as Sai baba was going out walking, the Rohilla came up from behind, with a stout club in his right hand and reached striking distance. Baba turned towards him and touching or seizing his left wrist cast a glance at him beneath which the poor Rohilla cowered and sank like a lump of lead, powerless to lift his club or even to lift himself. Baba left him there and went away. Later the man had to be raised up with some one's help. In few days the man took leave of Baba and left Shirdi for good never to return.

The other Rohilla was not intolerant but was rendering humble service in the Sansthan.

As for intolerance, that was not confined to this Muslim devotee. There were some Hindu devotees who exhibited this feature. But Baba invariably discountenanced it, in every case.

It is neither necessary nor possible nor desirable to narrate all the experiences I had with Baba or in reference to Baba. Baba's kindness and provision for my welfare knew no limits. His methods of help were various and depended on the nature of the devotee concerned and the attendant circumstances. In my case I had experience of all forms of his help. The first method of help is this: (1) When we are in difficulties or when Baba wants us to take a particular course, the inspiration comes to us that, that course should be adopted and we have also the feeling that the inspiration comes from Baba. If I am wanted at a very extraordinary time to go to Baba for private and solitary communion the call within is enough to indicate it. This first method relates to inspirations when we are awake. (2) The second method is to give the suggestion or indication or idea, in dreams, or trances - sometimes through Baba's personal appearance. This, of course, is the most impressive and unmistakable method. (3) A third method is where Baba directs us to go to some third person for a solution or hint. Sometimes it happens that the third person is totally unfit even to understand the difficulty or the solution. Yet the solution is given by that man without knowing what the problem is and what

the solution is and how he is benefiting us. He is a mere peg to hang the solution on. Baba has helped me in all these and other ways and given me valuable training alike when he was in the body and after he left it. I regard Sri Sai Baba as the same spirit as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and one instance of the help he has given me recently-through this perception of identity may be mentioned.

Some eight years back I went to Dakshineswar to see the places and things of interest. I got the service of a local man to act as my cicerone and he showed me the Kali figure that Paramahansa worshipped and other images. I looked at Kali standing outside the worship room and passed on. I was anxious to see the tiny image of Ramlal that sported as a living boy with Paramahansa and told my guide to show me Ramlal. He took me to one of the temples and showed me a huge image and said "This is Ramlal". I said it could not be. The man replied that he as the local man should know and that I, as a stranger, could not possibly be better informed. I had to apologise and I wondered what to think of the 'Ramlal'. I had read about him in Paramhansa's life. Just at this juncture, a pujari of these temples came and inquired if I was from Deccan. I replied I was. Then he said he would show me round Kali and every other image at close quarters and with full details. I said I had just seen them. Then he insisted on my visiting them again. He did not want any money from me. The reason for his persistent request was that he had been instructed in a dream overnight that a devotee from Deccan would be coming on the following day and that he was to take him to all the images and help him to worship them. Thus he assured, I followed him. He took me inside the *Garbhagriha*, the holy of holies of Kali and said I was free to touch the image and worship as I liked. Next he said that he would show me Ramlal. I said I had been shown a huge figure as Ramlal by my guide. The pujari rated my cicerone for deceiving me and then took up the tiny image of Ramlal that Paramahansa had played with and placed it on my lap. Thus all my expectations were fulfilled beyond measure- all through the grace of Sai who is no other than Ramakrishna.

The great favour Sainath had conferred on me by taking me so close to him and loving me and by my loving him,

had its reflections in the way in which some eminent living saints treated me.

Madhava Nath Maharaj often seen at Poona and elsewhere (who passed away a month or two back) was seen by me in 1927. Maharaj without being told of me, spotted out my connection with Sai and said I was Sai Baba's man. He narrated to me the exact words that passed between me and Baba at our first interview; and he added that he was then present- i.e., of course in invisible spirit form, or as Sai Baba.