

II

(10th, 20th, 25th, 28th May 1936)

Professor G.G.Narke, M.A., (Cal.) M.Sc.(Manch). Professor of Geology & Chemistry College of Engineering, Deccan Gymkhana, age 53, Brahmin, Poona says:

Experiences with saints and progress in one's spiritual affairs cannot be revealed. According to the (hackneyed) saying of Kabir Jinnepaya unnechhupaya 'What one has got, he keeps secret'. This has been the strict injunction of my teacher Sri Sai Baba. The mouth instinctively closes when I try to mention my experiences. I can and may give some superficial account of occurrences and things concerning Sai Baba. These are well known and no rule of secrecy is violated thereby. But they are chaff and hardly worth any trouble to write or talk about. Yet as you are keen after any bit of information I shall mention some of such facts. Of course, the deepest experience one has is incapable of utterance, apart from any question or rules of secrecy.

In the first place, you see I have placed Sai Baba amongst the house hold Gods we worship daily at home. Sai Baba is God-not an ordinary *Satpurusha*. The divine gleam in Sai's eyes denotes that He is the Satpurusha. His powers and actions were wonderful. I will give a chronological account of my spiritual leanings and how I came into contact with Sai Baba.

My early surroundings promoted faith in Sai Baba My father-in-law, Mr.Buty, my wife and my mother were all great devotees of Sai Baba and worshipped him as God. I

used to read *Jñaneswari* and other works which deal with greatness of *Satpurushas*.

In 1907-9 I was at Calcutta and was trained in Geological survey and (as a scholar from C.P.) I had got my M.A. In 1905. I was sent in 1909 as State Scholar of Govt. of India to Manchester where I stayed till 1912 and got my M.Sc in Geology and Mining. I came back in August 1912. My wife, mother and my father in-law were often at Shirdi and they wrote to me to go over to Shirdi to pay my respects to Sai Baba. I wrote back to say that I would go, if Baba wanted me. My father-in-law then asked Baba and wrote to me that Baba wanted me. So I went to Shirdi in April 1913. Baba was very kind to my relations. He would jump up (occasionally) and play a jig, as it were, before my mother, showing how happy he was to see my mother. Mr. Madhava Rao Deshpande went with me and introduced me for the first time to Sai Baba. Baba replied "You introduce him to me! I have known him for thirty generations (pedi). " What wonderful knowledge of the past was this!

The first impression I got of Sai Baba was from his eyes. They pierced me through and through. And his image as seated at the Chavadi has left an indelible impression on my heart. As for the inner experiences they gradually grew upon me. First, I fell in with the current and did my Seva (i.e., service) to Baba and attended the *Aratis*, etc. At an Arati, in my early visit Sai Baba was in a towering passion. He fumed, cursed and threatened for no visible cause. I doubted if he was a mad man. That was a passing thought. The Arati was completed in the usual way. In the afternoon (of that day), I went and massaged his feet and legs. Then he stroked my head and said "I am not mad". Lo! He is seeing my heart. Nothing is concealed from Him. He is my "*Antaryami*- the inner soul of my soul." I thought, Thenceforward, numerous instances occurred in my own experience of his *Antaryamitwa*. When he talked, he spoke as one seated in my heart, knowing all its thoughts, all its wishes, etc. This is God within. I had no hesitation in deciding that he was God. I tested him at times. Each test produced the same conviction that he was all knowing, all seeing and able to mould all things to his will. A few instances out of hundreds may be cited here which showed that nothing was beyond Him or

concealed from Him, in the past, present and future.

In 1913, Baba told me that my father in law would build a Dagdiwada, (i.e. a stone edifice) at Shirdi and that I would be in charge of it. It was only in 1915-16 that my father in-law began to build it (i.e., the building in which Baba's tomb is erected) and it was after 1918-19, I was one of the Trustees in charge of that tomb.

My mother was anxious about my employment. I was ever tossing from place to place and often had periods of unemployment. I was trained in England as a Geologist, Mining Engineer; and here in India I was on the look out for prospecting jobs advertised in the press and took up one job after another finishing each in a short time. My first stay at Shirdi was only for three or four days and I then went back to Balaghat and Burma. After three months my work under B.O.C ceased, and I went back to Nagpur and thence to Shirdi and stayed four months there with my wife and went back to Nagpur. Again as I got a letter from Madhava Rao that Baba wanted me. I went to Shirdi alone and stayed thirteen months. I was without employment and I did not care. Sometimes, I had stray fancies that a fakir's life was good for me.

It was a day in 1914. Baba had got ready a number of *Kupnis* (somewhat like gowns or togas which are worn by fakirs) and presented a number of people with them. I was watching the distribution from a distance and hoped that one might be conferred on me to be kept with me and worn on special occasions, e.g., *Bhajans* in honour of Sai Baba. Baba stopped distribution even many *Kupnis* still remained with him. He beckoned to me a little later and placing his hand kindly on my head stroked it and said "Do not blame me for not giving you a *kupni*. That Fakir (meaning evidently God) has not permitted me to give you one."

My relations were asking Baba what was to become of me, seeing that I had such an unsettled course of life. My mother also saw that I went up to distant places like Calcutta and Burma for prospecting jobs and prayed to baba taht I should be provided by his grace with good employment nearer home or Shirdi. Baba answered and told them "I will settle him at Poona." I got sometimes a number of jobs at the

same time and I had to choose. I went to Baba each time, relying wholly on his foresight and all seeing wisdom to guide me. I had as great a reliance on him as sucking babe on its mother. His choice was often times strange. When there was once a choice between Calcutta and (the more distant) Burma, he chose the latter. He always would say "Go to Burma and Poona" or "go to such and such a place and Poona". Adding Poona every time he made the selection. In 1916 I had to choose between an offer from Banares of a professorship and a prospecting job at Burma. Baba told me "Go to Burma and Poona". I always laughed within myself at the addition of Poona as I was Mining Engineer and Poona held no prospects for me. Even in 1913 Baba was seeing my present permanent appointment as professor of Geology and Chemistry in Poona which I have held since 1918. The entire future of my career was but present to him.

About 1916 I returned to Shirdi after a long spell of absence. I enquired, as soon as I arrive, who were doing what service to Baba. I was told Vaman Rao Patel, B.A., L.L.B. was doing the service of begging food in the village on behalf of Baba and I felt a bit jealous. "If that is so why should I not be given that work", I thought to myself, but said nothing. It was then Darshan time and I had no time to undress. I went in my full suit, boot, trousers, coat and hat to Baba's Masjid. Baba was being asked three times permission to send Vaman Rao with begging bowl. Suddenly he pointed to me and said "Let this man go and beg for food with that bowl today". I went begging at noon for Baba's sake i.e., for food for Baba in my ordinary costume. People could not understand why I was chosen for this office. But since I had that desire, Baba as my innermost soul, my Antaryami noticed it and gave me the opportunity of serving him in that way. This honour of begging for food on his behalf at noon time was reserved by Baba for very few.

It was in 1917 that the announcement was made that a Professor of Geology for the College of Engineering at Poona was wanted. I asked Baba if I should apply for the post. He said 'yes' and I went to Poona to see all people concerned. It was a hard and uphill work, as the applicants for the post were many and were supported by various influential per-

sons. After I left Shirdi, Baba inquired of the men there. "Where is Narke gone?" They told him "He has gone to Poona to try for the appointment". "Allah will bless" was Baba's remark. He then asked whether I had any children and was informed that several were born but none survived (they died after a very short life). "Allah will bless" was again his remark. I secured the appointment in 1918 and was made permanent in 1919; and children born to me since then are not short lived. I have four sons now. All these are evidently secured by Baba's grace.

So much can be easily said of Sai Baba by all- mere observers from outside. But he who judged of Baba by the outside alone would be greatly mistaken in his estimate. Baba was, of course, adapting himself to the capacity of people that resorted to him for help and protection. Most of them were superficial people - seeking mostly some material gain or advantage; and to them he did not reveal his inner nature. But when anyone capable of diving deeper came to him he revealed more of himself and his powers. I was keenly observing him from the first and he noticed it and encouraged my habit of observing and judging- complementing me as a "*Hushiar*" or clever". On occasions he told me "What a '*Dubya*' i.e., sluggard you are" - evidently referring to my failure to penetrate beneath the surface of things on those occasions. Baba was not the man to stifle legitimate inquiry. Everything he did or said was full of significance; mostly I could understand them.

To one deeply observing him; the startling fact came out into greater and greater prominence that Baba was living and operating in other worlds also, besides this world and in an invisible body. Remarks made by him openly would be treated as meaningless ranting by those who did not know him. His language also was highly cryptic full of symbology, parable, allegory and metaphor. Literal interpretations of them would be made by superficial people who would then conclude that Baba was a worldly man amongst worldly men and a very avaricious man at that. For instance, a man came to Baba and watched him for a time; and I asked him what impression he formed of Baba. His answer was "I never saw any saint talking of money all the hours of the day" and he felt disappointed. This man did not know that "*paisa*" -

money was used by Baba to denote *punya*, *Apurva* or merit, very often. But on a careful observation and analysis of his talks, one must conclude that his nature, powers and functions were very great and that the way in which people would benefit by His guidance and help would also be peculiar.

4th June, 1936

In 1914 or thereabouts, a rich old gentleman of Harda came with a lady to Shirdi. He was suffering from T.B. i.e., consumption. During the space of one month, there was noticeable improvements in his health. So he made Shirdi his residence. At the end of the second month, he grew worse and his end seemed to be approaching. One day the ladies of his house and their friends told me that his condition was critical and there was no senior male to go and ask Baba for help- and sent me to ask Baba for his Udhi. I went up. Baba told me that the man would be better for quitting this earth. **“What can the Udhi do? Anyhow take the Udhi and give it as it is wanted”** he said. So I took and gave the Udhi but, of course, refrained from intimating Baba’s words to anyone. The condition grew worse. Then Shama, (i.e., Madhavarao Deshpande) arrived and went to Baba and told him of the imminent death. Baba appears to have said “How can he die? In the morning he will come to life”. This was taken to mean that the old man would not quit the earth. So they placed lamps all round the corpse and waited till noon. Life was not restored to the corpse. Funeral ceremonies followed. The Harda gentleman’s relations thought that Baba had given false hopes and went away from Shirdi. For three years they did not return to Shirdi. Then one day, a relative of the deceased saw Baba in a dream, with a deceased’s head over his own (i.e., Baba’s) and Baba disclosed the lungs- in a rotten state, and said “From the torture of all this, I have saved him”. Thereafter, he and his relations renewed their visits to Shirdi. Baba’s words “How can he die? He will come to life” evidently referred to survival of human personality and taking up new forms of life.

Baba was frequently talking of his travels with an invisible body across great distances of space (and time). In the mornings, sitting near his dhuni (fire) with several devotees, he would say to what distant place he went overnight and

what he had done. Those who had slept by his side the whole night at the Masjid or Chavadi knew that his physical body was at Shirdi all the night. But his statements were literally true and were occasionally verified and found to be true. He had travelled to distant places in an invisible. i.e., spirit form and rendered help there. Again he would frequently talk of postmortem experiences.

A Shirdi Marwadi's boy fell ill and died. People returned from the funeral to the Masjid with gloomy faces. Sai Baba then said of that boy "He must be nearing the river now, just crossing it". I felt that the reference could only be to Vaitarini (Styx).

He told several people of the past lives and the events therein. He told me the facts of four previous lives of mine. He spoke this in the presence of others. But others did not and could not understand that it referred to me. He had the peculiar art of giving information to particular individuals in the midst of a group, in a way that they (those concerned) alone could understand, and not the other members of the group. Strangely enough, at one sitting by a few acts words, etc., he could and did benefit numerous persons. This power to travel in invisible body to distant parts of this world, to traverse other realms than the earth life and note or control what takes place there and to see the past and future alike revealed one great fact about His nature. Some of his own observations also brought that out clearly.

Sai Baba occasionally asked (I heard it myself) "**Where are you? Where am I? Where is this world?**" Occasionally he declared, pointing to his body or touching it and referring to it as "**this is my house**", "**I am not here. My Guru Mowrshad has taken me away**". As even in the flesh-in this earth life, he was not confined to his physical body, it may be truly said of him "Sai Baba is alive. He is where he was then. Even then he was where he is now." He also made occasional reference to what his function is and was in the terrestrial sphere and other worlds. He several times referred to his control of destinies of departed souls-indicating thereby his function in the Cosmic order. Sai Baba never spoke untruth, never spoke meaningless jargon. But only those who were familiar with his ways could make out the meaning of what

he said or did- when they were intended for their understanding.

UPADESHA, MANTRA, TANTRA, ETC

Sai Baba never gave me any mantra, tantra or Upadesa - and so far as I know, he gave these to none. Madhavarao Deshpande has told me of the following incident., Radhabai Desmukhin was at Shirdi waiting for a time on Baba and she wanted Upadesa. Finding that he gave her none, she started Satyagraha. She stopped taking food and was determined to be without food until Sai Baba should give her Upadesa. On the fourth day of the fast, Madhavarao taking pity on her condition went and told Sai Baba of it and requested him to pronounce the name of some God, so that she might take it as the mantropadesa for japa. Baba then sent for her and told her that giving Upadesa was not in his line, that he following his Guru had different traditions, that his Guru was so powerful that he trembled to go and stand before him, and that the help given by the Guru was invisible and secret and not by oral instruction.

mekanavala isannara guru navhe:- I do not instruct through the ear.

Amacha gharane niralaa aahe:- Our traditions are different was what he said.

Sai Baba never* lectured, nor discoursed systematically as others do. He gave hints - very pregnant hints. A word or a sentence or two at a time was all he cared to utter. But from them an observant devotee could build up his own system, lecture or philosophy. It is difficult therefore to be dogmatic if one is asked what are Sai Baba's aims, methods etc. But stray hints were forthcoming.

AIM IN LIFE OR PURUSHARTHA

Did Sai Baba ask people to aim at Moksha? Did he advocate Viveka and Vairagya? Never have I heard that from his lips.

Reaching God is the aim. That was the way he put it.

Alla milanaara saptasamudra nihala karanaha

i.e., Reaching God, Crossing or traversing all the Oceans and Worlds.

Veda Parkarana Getting beyond chains (or limits)

He never (so far as I know) spoke of (Maya) (or the theory that all existence in the sublunary sphere is mere illusion) to my knowledge. He took the commonsense view that this world and the worlds beyond are real, and that we have to make the best of them, here and hereafter.

KARMA AND REINCARNATION

These were frequently referred to by him. “We must sow good(results) in this life and the next” was the truth that underlay many of the stories he told. He frequently referred to past lives of others and occasionally referred to the future life of some. No one moving with him could have even a momentary doubt about postmortem existence and the existence of other worlds than this, wherein rewards and punishments for acts done here would be reaped. These are Hindu doctrines and beliefs. Coming to the question of Baba’s Hinduism or other religion - Baba never declared (so far as I know) whether he belongs to any religion, caste, creed, etc. He was above all. But he has mentioned and done several things showing his relation to Hinduism.

I have heard Sai Baba say maja guru brahman aahe i.e., **my Guru is a Brahmin.**

BABA’S ATTITUDE TO HINDUISM AND BRAHMINS

Baba had a great regard for the B.Gita, Bhawartha Ramayana, Eknath Bhagwata, Panchadashi, Yoga Vasishta, the Puranas etc. His talks had reference to the contents of these often. When Jnanadeva’s Arati was begun, he would sit up, fold his hands joining his palms in front of his chest in token of reverence and close his eyes. About Panchadashi, he said to Mr.Khaparde (as I hear) yeto ammara Khajana hai “This is our treasury”, i.e., it contains whatever is valuable for our spiritual welfare. I know personally his reverence for Yoga Vasishta. One day, in my early days (1914) Baba asked me several times to give him Rs.15 as Dakshina. I had no money and he knew that fully well. So when I was alone with him I said

“Baba, you know, I have no money and why do you ask me for Rs.15 Dakshina?” Baba answered that he knew my impecunious condition well enough. “But” he added **“you are reading Yoga Vasishtha now. The part you are now reading is specially important. Get me Rs.15 Dakshina from that”**. I was reading Yoga Vasishtha. Getting money out of it was deriving valuable lessons therefrom: and giving the money to Baba meant of course lodging the lessons in my heart, where he stayed as my Antaryami. I also know that he held Rama and Krishna in great reverence.

BABA AND MAHARASHTRA SATPURUSHAS

Baba had great reverence for Saints like Jnaneshwar, Tukaram. What were the aims, and the virtues needed for achieving them, in Sai Baba’s view and what Sadhanas did he favour?

OF THE FOUR MARGAS

1. Yoga Marga

Regarding this as chiefly based on (1)Asana (2)Pranayama (3)Concentration (4)Rousing the Kundalini and (5)Achieving higher powers thereby, enroute, Sai Baba did not care for these. These were not the steps he recommended to any so far as I know. On the other hand, he said (I know personally), “Those who proceed by the method of Pranayama must come to me ultimately for further progress.

II. Karma Marga

Baba set the example of living amidst society and labouring to produce goods. He ground grain into flour. He was not for ascetic desertion of society, nor for begging. Though he himself begged within limits (prescribed by his Rinanubandha perhaps) it was for a little food only and when he demanded Dakshina that was for a number of reasons, chiefly clearing off Rinanubandha. He wanted the general run of visitors to continue their grihasta lives and did not advocate Sanyas, i.e., that they should renounce society or go to beg. He mad me and Vamanarao Beg, not for ourselves but only for the Guru-as humble service to the Guru. Though Baba did not say so, I think he realised the evil of begging, i.e., indiscriminate begging, to be the loss of one’s stored up

merit, i.e., “Apurva”. Sai Baba’s demand for Dakshina was explained by him, when some one asked him why he asked for Dakshina: **“Hallo, do I ask Dakshina of every one? I demand only from those whom the Fakir (God) points out to me”**. He demanded only particular sums, and would not accept anything more. None refused Dakshina, when he wanted it. Sometimes the demand had other meaning, e.g., (1) get away, (2) get into contact with X,Y,Z etc.

III. Jnana Marga

If this is taken as something confined to inquiry into the Self and an effort to understand the Upanishads and Brahmasutras to get light on that inquiry, that was not Baba’s method and aim. His wish was not expressed. But by his example, his devotees should infer that he wanted them to become like himself. His knowledge and experience were, so far as I could see, real and realistic. His awareness exceeded the bounds of our space and time - extended over all the worlds and embraced the distant past and future as well as the present. He knew, therefore, what existed in any of the worlds and at any time had to offer for the soul’s enjoyment and with such knowledge he renounced all attachment. He was perfectly detached amidst numerous attractions. His life was, therefore, real Vairagya and real Nishkamya Karma which would lead one to God.

IV. Bhakti Marga

This is, of course, the main plank of most saints- as it is, of Sai Baba. Obeying, serving and loving God are its chief features. The peculiar feature stressed by Sai’s example and words is the vast importance of developing this devotion on the basis of devotion to one’s guru or teacher. It is seeing God in, through and as the Guru, identifying the Guru with God.

BABA’S GURU

Of his guru, hardly anything is known. I have heard him say Maja guru brahman aahe i.e., my Guru is a Brahmin. Baba held real Brahmins in high esteem. He has said **“Brahmins earn much ‘pica’,** (i.e., Punya, Apurva or merit) by their ways.” A disciple is very different from a devotee. The Guru is connected by a close and intimate tie with and has every respon

sibility for the disciple. He has no such close tie with a devotee and is not bound to bear all his sins and sorrows. Sai Baba had no disciple. The disciple must serve his master to carry out all his wishes strictly and to the letter. As Sai said: **“I would tremble to come into the presence of my Guru”**. There was no one prepared to serve him in that way at Shirdi. It seems he asked: **“Who dares to call himself my disciple? Who can serve me adequately and satisfactorily?”** But, of devotees, Sai Baba had a large number. These he looked after, encouraged and protected and gave by example and occasional gestures, directions etc., some instruction. Sai Baba’s method of teaching or rather improving the devotee who came to him was not oral instruction. His moral tales and a few directions, occasionally given were, no doubt, teaching through the ear. But these were exceptional and their effect was very little compared with his main traditional method. According to Sai Baba’s traditions, the disciple or devotee that comes to the feet of the Guru in complete self surrender has to be no doubt pure, chaste and virtuous. But he need not necessarily to go on with any active practice of Japa or meditation. On the other hand, Japa, meditation or any other intellectual process which carries with it the consciousness and assertion, “I am doing this” is a handicap. All sense of the devotees’ or disciples’ ahankara, Ego or little self has to be wiped out, swept out of the memory and mind-as it is an obstruction to the Guru’s task. The Guru does not teach. He radiates influence. That influence is poured in and absorbed with full benefit by the soul which has completely surrendered itself, blotting out the self, but is obstructed by the exercise of intelligence by reliance on self exertion and by every species of self-consciousness and self assertion.

This great truth, all observant persons visiting Sai Baba would have noticed or learnt. Sai Baba’s words to some devotees were: **“Be by me and keep quiet. I will do the rest”**, i.e., secretly or invisibly. Of course, faith in him is a pre-requisite. But one had merely to see him and stay by him a while and at once was endowed with faith. Baba gave experience to each devotee- experience of Baba’s vast powers of his looking into the heart, into the distant regions of space and time, past or future and then and there infused faith.

One had not merely to swallow everything on trust. The solid benefit, temporal or spiritual reaped by the devotee and his feeling that he is under the eye and power of Baba always wherever he may go and whatever he may do, give him an ineradicable basis for his further spiritual and temporal guidance. Baba's is the power that controls this world's goods and our fate here and now-as well as our experience and fate in the future in this world and many unseen worlds-unseen at present.

So the duty of a devotee or an aspirant is only (1) to keep himself fit for this Guru's grace i.e., chaste, pure, simple and virtuous, and (2) to look trustfully and sincerely and to raise him to various experiences, higher and higher in range till at last he is taken to the distant goal whatever that might be "One step enough for me" is the proper attitude now. He need not take trouble to decide complicated, metaphysical and philosophical problems about ultimate destiny. He is yet ill prepared to solve them. The Guru will lift him, endow him with higher powers, vaster knowledge and increasing realisation of truth. And the end is safe in the Guru's hands.

All this was not uttered by Sai Baba, at one breadth to me or within my hearing. But the various hints I got from his example and dealings with many and his occasional words- when put together amount to this. And commonsense points in the same direction. In my opinion, mere talk of Viveka and Vairagya without power of knowing what there is to experience or enjoy and what the things are that one is to renounce is childish and leads to self-delusion and deluding others. It is bookish wisdom and not real, not one that can stand the strain of actual life. People talking merely of these, without power to be really filled with them prove hypocrites. When Baba said: **'I am in each dog, pig and cat.'** He was feeling himself in the inside of the cats etc., in question and could state what they felt and what treatment they got. But others say it because it is found in the Gita, etc. and they believe it to be true. But in point of feeling and realisation, they say what they do not feel. These lead to hypocrisy.

Baba's real nature and greatness are seen from an incident known to me. I realised that Baba was God from the devotees' point of view, and yet, a man seen in the flesh and

with limitations to which an individual embodied soul is subject. The two co-exist and are both true - each in its way. But my friends (i.e., some of the devotees) at Shirdi did not agree with me or relish this view of mine. They once talked of 6 crores of islanders in Dwaraka at Shree Krishnas' time and I then disputed that estimate of the population, as now we are about 33 crores in all in India and India is so overpopulated that we have to tread on each other's heels. Then they asked me if I would agree to abide by Baba's decision on the matter. I agreed. We all went to Baba.

Madhava Rao and other devotees asked Baba- Baba, are the Puranas true?

Sai Baba: Yes, True.

Devotees: What about Rama and Krishna?

Sai Baba: They were great souls. Gods they were. Avatars.

Devotees: This Narke will not accept all that. He says you are not God.

Sai Baba: What he says is true. But I am your father and you should not speak like that. You have to get your benefit and everything from me.

Sai Baba thus admitted his limitation. He was God no doubt, in the experience of the devotee. But because the devotee felt that, Sai Baba did not assert himself to be, in fact, nothing but God; he did not draw logical corollaries from it, nor use that position to help himself to the wealth etc., of the devotees. Sai Baba did not use the fact of his devotees viewing him as God to declare for Antinomianism, i.e., setting himself up as above law. On the other hand, Sai Baba never disobeyed either the moral law or the law as it prevails in the country. He was never indecent in dress or behaviour and was very reserved with women.

SAI BABA'S MOODS

No doubt, in certain ecstatic moods, he said (and I heard this myself) my Allah Hum I am God. But this was once in a way. His usual -almost invariable-role was that of a devotee of God entrusted with vast powers to carry out what God (the "Fakir") directs. "Allah Malik". God is the master. "Allah

Bhale Karenga”, “God will bless” were constantly on his lips. Also, I am God’s slave. I remember God, etc.

BABA AND THE SEX QUESTION

Baba’s was Askhalita Brahmacharya and his glittering eyes spoke it out. He kept women at a distance. During the day, a very few women were allowed to massage his legs - and that only up to the knee. He was always clad and never indecently exposed himself.

BABA’S VIRTUES

He was impartial and just. I have seen rich and highly placed persons going to him, being practically ignored by him - as he saw through the outside, into the real nature, or the heart of the person approaching him. I have also seen him pay great regard to and speak enthusiastically of some poor man that came to him, saying “ He has much money” (“Pica”) i.e., much of punya accumulated.

STERN JUSTICE

A saint should not be judged by the character of those that gather around him. Prostitutes, women hunters, avaricious people and sinners of various sorts came to him with a view mostly to gain material advantage. But when they failed to take advantage of his presence to improve themselves but fell into sins, he let them suffer. His justice was severe. **“You have to cut your own child, if it falls athwart the womb”** he has said. Baba’s Boldness based on “Foreknowledge” or “Perfect Vision” - Baba was bold in his dealings with persons, with the forces of disease, etc. unknown to us but evidently well known to him. He occasionally infused faith in his devotees by such bold defiance of sanitary precautions. I will mention some instances known to me.

Baba used to get sweetmeat from a Halwai for Naivedya. One day in 1916, he lay a corpse, a plague stricken corpse. Plague was raging at Shirdi. Baba asked me to go and get the sweetmeat from his shop. I went and told the wife (who was weeping) of Baba’s order. She pointed to the corpse and said that I might take the Sweetmeat from the *almairah*. I took it, trembling with the fear that by this I might catch the infection and others too. That was given as

Naivedya. Baba told me **“you think you will live if you are away from Shirdi and that you would die, if you stay at Shirdi. That is not so. Whosoever is (destined) to be struck, will be struck; whosoever is to die will die; whosoever is to be caressed will be caressed”**. He encouraged me similarly when cholera raged in Shirdi. He had lepers around him who massaged his legs. One of them got cured. Baba made a leper take the dhuni and gave it as prasad to the devotees. The Udhi is put into the mouth of sick people. And the leper gave it to all by Baba's order! Yet no harm has resulted so far as I know.