

*Stages of Baba's personality*

Baba's direction to his biographer<sup>179</sup> is that he should be a humble chronicler of ascertained facts, but the demand of the modern, scientifically trained reader of a biography is that there should be a scientific presentation of even saints lives, showing the how and why of each part and how the parts fit into or grow out of each other. It may be difficult to reconcile these two. Still we are bound to attempt in this book, the via media presenting as much as possible of Baba's life in as scientific a way as possible without sacrificing the inspiring effect of a saintly biography or its truth. The predominant interest must be to note all the words, the sayings, the deeds, and moods, that indicate or prove the saintliness and form the super human or divine features of life. The subordinate

interest is to note if a scientific presentation of progress or development is possible of these parts of the sacred life, especially when such presentation may explain, sustain or add charm to the holiness or saintliness. The idea of development of personality is very widely accepted, and in the case of a number of human lives, even of saints, development is studied and noted, for development, after all, is mostly treated on the ethical plane and therefore there is ample material for study, and though the ground is hard, useful work can still be done. But yet to many, tracing the development or growth of the divine element in Baba looks almost hopeless as the inner life is hidden and there is very little information available about the earlier stages of his life. Personality is easily understood and dealt with in modern psychological or philosophical treatises by following the behaviourist plan. Take a personality as it is presented by each person and try to express what it is, namely the sum total of the various facets and portions that make up the man's personality as understood by himself and by his neighbours. That gives the current opinion of the man's personality. This is the behaviourist method of treating the self. This is mainly an external method. The internal is only to be inferred and cannot be easily got at. It is hard for a man even to observe the internal kernel of his own line of thought and action; and what is observed or felt is often found to be inexpressible. A good and full study of the Personality requires Baba's divine power of getting into and reading the heart of another, that is, getting to be *hisAntaryami*, the soul of his soul. Hence that cannot be expected here. So, we are left almost wholly where the behaviourist leaves us. But even so, there is something to present, and with the help of observations made by Sai Baba and other saints and the *Rishis*, we may try to present some sketch of the development of spiritual personality. After all, the development of spiritual personality must run on the lines prescribed for God-realisation or for reaching *Brahman* as set out in text books like *Vivekachudamani* and the *Bhakti sastras*, namely, *Bhagavata*. We shall see how taking the *Bhagavata* and *Brahma Sutras* and *Vivekachudamani* as our guide, what steps were being adopted by Sri Sai Baba from the earliest times and how

he progressed. That is an extremely interesting study, the materials for which, however are extremely scanty.

It is agreed practically by all that divinity is reached only by aloofness from the world's attractions, that *Asanga* and *vairagya* must be at the base of any course which leads to divinity, and contact with those who are in the light is necessary to kindle the torch within us to perceive the light within. Hence the study of such contact is the next course. Taking up the first course, in Baba's case, *vairagya* seems to have been centuries old and almost hereditary if not in the physiologists and psychologists sense, at least in the spiritualists' sense. Baba in his previous births, *janmas*, as reported by himself in his occasional references to his past births, was full of *vairagya*, thorough self-denial, and was working for the benefit of others and had conquered all his desires<sup>180</sup>. He always sacrificed his own interest to promote that of other people, a brother, a step-mother or a neighbour. In all these cases he acted without any expectation of reward and purely out of regard or compassion for them. So, the readiness to work for others good, not caring for one's own pleasures or benefits, and its presumable basis the perception of the real nature of one's self as above the material body and its animal urges, were the leading features of his past lives; and these must have been so deeply ingrained in his soul that from his very birth, he must have had these elements at least potentially within him which later got the chance of fuller growth and fruition.

*Purvabhyasena tenaiva hriyate hyavasco api sah.*

*Tatra tambuddhi samyogam Labhate pourva dehikam<sup>m</sup>,*

this means, The man not completing his *yoga sadhanas* in a particular birth is reborn in a *yogi's* or other suitable family and resumes the tendencies and aptitudes developed in the former birth. He is swayed unwittingly by the force of his former tendencies. Providence gave Baba the best stepping stones in the nineteenth century life also. Desertion by parents at a very early age and being brought up by a begging *fakir* who appears to have been a highly advanced *Sufi* and the fairly rapid death of both the original parents and *the fakir* and his wife, after arranging to leave him in the care of the Selu *zamindar* as an absolutely

helpless dependent having no claims whatever and no pretensions whatever; are all stepping stones. These are obviously the very best plot and manure for faith, trust, purity, *vairagya* and godliness, that is aloofness from the world and Love of God to grow, develop, and come to fruition. *Bhakti* is the best field or manure. Even for a *jnana* or *vichara margi*, it is highly important. *Moksha Sadhana samagriam Bhakti reva gariyasi. Bhakti marga* in the form of *Guru bhakti marga* was the whole course or sole *sadhana* of Baba's life. He fed on *Bhakti* alone, and by means of that alone became all that he was. For *bhakti*, which transformed itself into *Jnana*, after providing the *sadhana chatushtaya*, his absolute dependence served a very good purpose. As a child he must have been fondly loved by the *fakir* and his wife, and as a slightly grown up child or boy, he was loved and brought up by the Selu *zamindar*, Gopal Rao Deshmukh or Venkatesa. Here, therefore, we find the elements that make up a saint, absolute dependence or the fullest trust in the *fakir* and in a master, begetting no hatred but trust and deepest love, a love into which adverse elements like jealousy, envy and hatred, could not enter. The *sastras* declare that the qualification of a *sishya*<sup>182</sup> is that he should be free from pride, jealousy, sense of possession. A child absolutely dependent upon the foster father and mother or the chieftain and getting everything needed through love is bound to be totally free from such defects. These negative virtues are mere trifles. Positive strength of love ensures the presence of the negative virtues and a great deal more. It is not a mere negation that can build up divinity. It is love that can do it. God is Love. As Sir Walter Scott says, 'Heaven is Love and Love is Heaven', not merely in the enjoyment of it, for it is so happy to be loved, but also in the ultimate philosophical analysis and its result. On examination of the nature of divinity, *Satchitananda*, it is Love, Bliss and its fullest expression is the perfect saint in the flesh who ultimately after *Mahasamadhi* is recognised as nothing but *Prem Rupi* or God. This positive development of love can hardly be traced stage after stage. The course of true love never runs smooth. However, in Baba's life, hindrances, came. These may be studied. Usually we find obloquy, ill treatment and unkindness, would interfere with love. In Baba's case, he met with everyone of these. As a protege of the

Selu *zamindar*, he had envious opponents hurling brickbats at him with a view to kill him. But what was the response of this loving soul? Not the slightest impulse to revenge or hatred. On the other hand he revived the villain whose stone hit his master, and who, according to ordinary notions and feelings, would be reckoned as a mortal enemy. Enmity had no place in Baba's soul. His soul was nothing but fullness of love. Love that neutralises and chills the fire of enmity hurled at it. Love that serves for *Vairagya*, *Viveka* and for *Sama*, *dama*, *titiksha*, *uparati*, *Sraddha* and *Samadhana*. He pardoned all and proceeded onwards in his own march of love not minding opposite currents. Again when he came to Shirdi, mischievous boys pelted stones at him. Did he revenge himself on them? No. Hatred and desire for revenge were not within him. On the other hand he recognised that even those who were molesting his body were really his father's children and therefore objects of love for him. He forgave them readily and into the tinyhand that hurled stones at him, he placed sugarcandy, and the boys and children were wondering what sort of creature this *fakir* was who returned sugarcandy for stone pelting. They found mango trees gave fruit for pelting, but no man acted like those trees. They had not seen such *Vairagya* and *Viveka* and other noble qualities before. Again when the *Vanis* were having their laugh at him for being a crazy fellow and whom they wished to see deeply dejected for want of light him, as they had refused oil for his oil lamps, what did Baba do after converting water into oil and when they were down on their knees praying for forgiveness and praying also that he should not curse them? Baba's nature was never for cursing. What does a mother do when her angry infant puts its hand into dirt and flings the dirt at the mother's face? She quietly chides the child, washes its hand and advises it to behave better in the future. Baba's loving heart was the mother's heart. These *Vanis* were the erring children, and with his divine loving heart, Baba behaved just like a mother. He gave them good advice warning them against the evils of falsehood and rejoicing in other's sorrow. He reproached such conduct and took promises that such bad conduct would not be repeated, just like a loving mother. The reasons for his conduct on the above and other similar occasions were seldom avowed or expressed by him. But they can

be inferred from the attendant circumstances and from the analysis of similar mental states found in the books. He frequently recommended for his devotees *parayana* or basic spiritual study and endeavour. Eknath Bhagavat XI Skanda, which Baba referred to as *Brindavan Pothi* when recommending its earnest study to H.S. Dixit and which, he declared to Uddavesa Bua, constituted his own teachings as Krishna to the *Dwapara Yuga Uddava* and as Sai Baba to the *Kali yuga Uddhavesa Bua* throws considerable light on the basis for his forgiveness and avoidance of anger or hatred. Hence we may proceed to examine the reasons given in that holy text as the basis of such forgiveness and avoidance of hatred though Baba did not state his reasons.

What is the effect of Love upon the various thoughts, feelings, desires, aversions, capacities, incapacities, and the tendencies or impulses found to be the main features of various personalities? Self-love and self-assertion, resisting and overcoming the efforts of other selves adversely disposed are basic urges for ensuring the safe maintenance and progress of the physico-psychical organism in the ordinary individual. But altruism or care for others, even adverse individuals, to the detriment of one's own material interests but in promotion of one's higher or nobler side is also found. It may be weak in many but in the saint it gets quickly developed and overshadows or overpowers the earlier self-love and self-assertion of the brute or lower level. This altruism and active care for others form the important facets of Love. Love grows stronger by exercise, by *Abhyasa* and *Vairagya*. By constant altruism one becomes *Sarva bhuta kite ratah*<sup>183</sup> that is interested in the welfare of all creatures; all creatures get to be identified with oneself. Thus Love unifies, synthesises and strengthens one's self or moral nature, especially by the perception of unity of one's self with other selves. *Sarva bhutatma bhutatma*<sup>184</sup> becoming the self of all creatures, one becomes by love.

*Atmoupamyena sarvatra samam pasyati Yo Arjuna!*

*Sukham Va Yadi Va Dhukham Sa Yogi Paramo matah*<sup>185</sup>

this means, The perfect *yogi* feels the joys and sorrows of other men and creatures as his own and treats them as himself. His identification with other

selves is so perfect. This perfection is wrought by love. It can stand the rough test or violent and cruel conduct of others towards oneself. The various considerations or reasons or ways of viewing others that would enable one to put up with vile and cruel treatment at the hands of others are amply set out in the *Bhikshu Gita*<sup>186</sup>. Some of this reasoning or feeling may be quoted here, just as examples of the high level of thinking and acting that goes to make up perfect love or *Atma Nishta* even. The cruelly treated monk feels that the cruel tormentors and he are really one and the same or that they are parts of one universal system along with him. The teeth and tongue are parts of the same body. Sometimes it chances that the teeth bite the tongue. Then whom is a man to blame and quarrel with? He must quietly endure it with all placidity. Sometimes one limb hits against another. Who is to blame them? None. So the monk feels that the mind must be completely controlled and freed from all trace of hatred, blaming tendency eradicating the old and popular ways of reacting. Love is the best trainer and helper in mind conquest. By such conquest, it is easier for a person to raise himself from identification of himself with a narrow self with its needs and faculties confined to a particular body to identification with the universal self - the *Paramatma* or Divinity. By loving the *Guru* intensely, one achieves this result without going through all the arguments in favour of self-expansion or identification with the Supreme that are set out in this *Bhikshu Gita*, which Baba declared to be his teaching.

Are there stages in this expansion? Is there development from one level to higher levels? Probably there are. Acts first prompted by reason become habits and natural. The soul gets more and more mature, just as a small mango fruit emerging from the mango flower grows bigger, develops its parts, stores up acid, starch, and turns them all into sugar with an attractive covering or skin enclosing a hard seed. But it is not practicable, or necessary or possible to dissect Baba's self to see when he had the tiny size, the acid, and the unattractive skin and when the starch was stored and turned into sugar. Love generally beams out in action and very often the extent and nature of the love within is indicated by the extent and nature of the acts.

This is a general rule but in the cases of many and especially in the case of Baba, there are rules of conduct, principles and practice of secrecy, self-suppression and concealment which prevent the beholder from guessing the existence or the extent of the internal love. The popular maxim of Kabir *Jo paya unhe chupaya* which means He who has got something wealth, power and ability conceals it, may be taken with Srimad Bhagavata<sup>187</sup>,

Budho balakavat kridet kuscalo jadavat charet

Vadet unmattavat Vidwan Go charyam Naigamah Charet

which means, that a *sadhaka* or saint should not betray his fullest development but though wise should sport like a child or boy, though clever should behave like a dunce, though learned should talk like a crazy or insane person, and though versed in the scripture should act like a brute, for thus, his concentration within himself will remain undisturbed by other. It is thus the *Avadhuta Jnani* behaved<sup>188</sup>, that is *Jadonmatta Piscachavat* like a dullard idiot or obsessed man. Tiruvannamalai Seshadriswami feigned madness and advised a *sadhaka* to feign madness. A too open hearted man, one who reveals all the workings of his mind, is at the mercy of his surroundings and his soul development will be hindered. For instance the revelation of a little advance in virtue might evoke praise which in turn may raise up self conceit and vanity, and hinder further spiritual advance. Some error, some false step when confessed to outsiders might evoke severe censure, contempt or even hatred, and these may depress a man and even produce an inferiority complex. Just as solitude is helpful for spiritual practice, a screen of silence, a willful octopus like spread of blinding blackness preventing the idly curious from knowing one's inner working is useful or even necessary for one's proper attention to oneself,

Ayur vittam griha chidram mantram

Oushada samagamah dana mana apamanascha

Nava gopya Manishibhih

these are to be kept secret and *mantram* includes spiritual *sadhana*. Throughout Baba followed the rule of secrecy for himself, and except under strict necessity did not reveal his spiritual courses. For that matter he never communicated his

name, his antecedents, and only late in life, shortly before he passed away, he revealed his Brahmin parentage at *Patri* and his breeding by the *Fakir*, and even his *Guru's* name was rarely mentioned though the rule is

Gurum prakascayet dhiman,

mantram Yatnene gopayet,

that publish the *Guru* but conceal his teaching is the wiseman's rule. The course of instruction he obtained from his present *Guru* was revealed to Radhabai Deskmukh first and next to Anna Saheb Dabolkar alias Hemadpant. He revealed his dealings with his *Guru* and others at times, and several of those revelations are set out in the Gospel of Baba but they seem mostly to refer to former births of Baba. Of these former births, he mentioned a good number without giving dates and places. So we are often left in doubt whether Baba derived any teaching or other benefits in the last *janma* or previous *janmas*. Some of these trainings are remarkable and the experiences mentioned by him are always valuable, whatever *janma* they may refer<sup>90</sup>. In reference to his making enquiries about realisation along with three other *sadhakas* and his determination not to rely upon bookish knowledge to reach the highest goal but to rely completely upon surrender to a *Parama Guru* called a Vanajari.

Ananaya prokte gativatra Nasti

Aniyan hyatarko Anupramanat<sup>189</sup>

that is As the matter is subtle, there is no other way for realisation except another's teaching. His three friends and fellow *sadhakas* did not believe that a *Guru* was necessary and trusted to then-book learning to achieve spiritual progress, that is, *Atma Jnana* and *Brahma Nishta*. They came across the *Vanajari Guru* who offered to help them. The three companions disdained the help and went away. Baba alone went to the *Guru* and accepted help and nourishment from him and placed himself completely at his mercy. That *Guru* tested the extent of his trust and confidence by tying up his legs with a rope and making him hang down from a tree at the brink of a well just above the water. Baba stood the test. Four or five hours after the test began, the *Guru* who had gone away came back and asked him how he fared. Baba instead of fidgeting

and fretting, fuming and cursing, as some others might have done, was calm, cool and happy because of his complete faith that the *Guru* would not do anything except what was best for him. The *Guru* having thus sufficiently tested his faith admitted him into his school of love and confidence and enabled him by many years probation to reach perfection. This was without any reference to dates, but taking into consideration his probation under the *Fakir* and the *Selu zamindar* Venkatesa, this training was probably by a *Guru* of a former life. Anyhow the teaching is very useful for *sadhakas* for governing their own selves though it may not be easy to fix up this training in the present history of Baba. Even if it was in a previous birth, that *purva abhyasa* was deeply ingrained in Baba and served as a basis even for the latest life.

Some readers might however desire that the development of Baba in this last birth, with which we are mainly concerned with, should be dealt with as our main interest. Hence we shall proceed to consider that alone.

The proper way of dealing with such a difficult subject as personality appears to be after all the common sense way of treating a personality as viewed by the world. In the case of Sai Baba we have his earliest period with his original parents who had deserted him or had gave him away and with whom his stay was far too short for any noticeable development or change of personality. The next stage of life reached by Baba was the stage when he stayed with the *fakir* to whom he had been handed over. This appears to have continued for at least four or five years, almost from the first to the sixth year, the most impressionable period of his whole life. This *fakir* appears to have been a very advanced *Sufi* and he and his wife appear to have loved Sai Baba tenderly and brought him up with all attention and care. The events, if any, of that period are not known, but might be inferred from the fact that in later life when Baba referred to his *Guru*, he used the term *Fakir* to denote God or *Guru*, and hence taking it that the term *Fakir* referred to this *fakir* to whom he was handed over, it is clear that he regarded him as his All-in-All, as God, and as *guru*, and, therefore the relations must have been of the most perfect sort, that is implicit and thorough faith and confidence on the one hand and complete support on the other. That is the ideal

relation between God and his devotee. The life of Baba was to be a life of perfection which, after *Mahasamadhi*, should be fully recognised as the Divine operating without limitations of time or place, and for the benefit not of one individual or of one country but for all. Therefore the grounding for that must be in the earliest perfection of love towards God or towards anything regarded as God. The *fakir* having been regarded as God and as everything to Baba was loved with perfect faith and bliss. Baba had therefore, we may presume, a thorough grounding in love which is the positive side. The negative side that goes with it, rather the obverse of it is freedom from attachment to the world. Ordinarily love of parents, love of sisters and brothers, love of friends, wealth, and possessions crowd into one's soul and crowd out the idea of God or leave it as a faint outline just impinging upon the other items occupying the soul. In the case of Sai Baba, the Father and mother are the earliest gods. So the *fakir* and his wife must have given him the God idea and must have responded to his love and his need for protection; and thus the positive and the negative go together in this early period, namely thorough detachment from the world and thorough attachment to God or the *Guru* representing God. This epoch continued only for a short period of five or six years though it might be of great importance in making up Baba's life. On the death of the *fakir*, Baba was taken to the Selu *zamindar* Gopal Rao Deshmukh, who was a perfect lover of God under the name of Tirupati Venkatesa. So the next period of stay of ten or twelve years with that Master or *Guru* to whom the *fakir's* widow handed him over, was the most important in Baba's life. As part of Baba's destiny, the *fakir's* widow died soon after leaving him under the care of his master who had become All-in-All to him. Here again Baba's destiny was that his previous line of thinking, feeling and being should be continued and not disturbed. The love which began under the *fakir* became still more powerful, we may presume, under the care of Gopal Rao Deshmukh or Venkatesa. Gopal Rao treated him as the reincarnation of Kabir, himself having been Ramananda of Kasi, Kabir's *Guru* in a former birth of his. The love of Ramananda to Kabir, pure, perfect and unalloyed with any wordly taint, must have therefore prevailed between Venkusa and Baba. Baba had no care for

anything and was not distracted by any education or what is usually called education, namely, learning. He was perpetually attending upon Venkatesa Gopal Rao Deshmukh in a way which the *Guru Gita* aptly describes as the proper attitude. *Nati Dure* and *Nichavat*, That is, Baba was like a peon, ever ready at hand to carry out the Chieftain's orders. There was no distraction of games or playmates or rivalry or any examination to trouble Baba. His whole heart ran on to the Master. Baba himself gives a description<sup>90</sup> which applies here also, 'I loved to gaze at him all the while, and even for a few seconds if he were not there to see, I would not like to have eyes at all. I did not wish to go back. I forgot all things but the *Guru*. My life was concentrated in my sight and my sight in him. That was the object of my meditation. In silence, I bowed'. These words referred to a *Guru* of a former life probably. But the description of the contact with the latest *Guru*<sup>190</sup> is on the same lines and as follows,

'For 12 years I waited on my *Guru* who is peerless and loving. How can I describe his love to Me? When he was in *Dyanastha* that is love trance I sat and gazed at him. We were both filled with *Bliss*. I cared not to turn my eye upon anything else. Night and day I pored upon his face with an ardour of love that banished hunger and thirst. The *Guru's* absence for a second made me restless. I meditated on nothing but the *Guru*, and had no goal, or object, other than the *Guru*. Unceasingly fixed upon him was my mind. Wonderful indeed, the art of my *Guru*! I wanted nothing but the *Guru* and he wanted nothing but this intense love from me. Apparently inactive, he never neglected me, but always protected me by his glance. That *Guru* never blew any *mantra* into my ear. By his grace, I attained to my present state. Making the *Guru* the sole object of one's thoughts and aims one attains *Paramartha*, the Supreme Goal.

This is the only truth the *Guru* taught me. The four *sadhanas* and Six *sastras* are not necessary. Trusting in the *Guru* fully, is enough.

The above is a true narration of the actual facts by Baba, the soul of truth. It is by learning these facts that one can understand and appreciate texts like *Narada's Bhakti Sutras*<sup>191</sup>, for example

Having which, *Bhakti* or Love one relinquishes all desire, grief, hostility indulgence in worldly pleasures, and all efforts at selfish advancement.

Knowing which, one becomes ecstatic, quiet, and happy in oneself,

One renounces all worldly concerns and even *Vedic* rites.

Concentration on love, apathy towards everything, against it.

Giving up all other supports than love, that is, having no other *sadhana*.

Narada says Love surrenders all actions to God and feels extreme restlessness in being without Him.

God and his devotee are the same.

This is the highly romantic love which even between sexes and at very early ages is so hard to find. But in Baba's life, without any intrusion of any sex and without any incorporation of mere romantic stories, this love was at its height. Baba felt that the object of his love was flowing to him. It is under such circumstances that *dharana*, *dhyana*, and *samadhi*, naturally flow on in one's soul and end in perfect *samadhi* or perfect *laya*. The lover gets absorbed in the object of love, and Nature works a unity between the two, the lover and the loved. *Apana Sarika Karitat Tatkai* is what Tukaram says about the work of the *Samartha Guru* towards his *sisya*. That is, the *Samartha* turns the *sisya*, without any difficulty and without requiring any period of time, into his absolute likeness. This process of love which Baba describes as subsisting between himself and Venkatesa was the one course calculated to carry out Tukaram's dictum, that is, the turning or transformation of the pupil into the perfect likeness of the Master. It is not as though it were the result of willing on the part of the Master though that also may have been the case. It is a purely natural process. The mutual attraction of soul to soul and the passing on of the nature of one to the other was the same as in the case of a huge magnetic dynamo and a piece of iron brought into contact with it. Therefore this long period of ten or twelve years at *Selu* sufficed, we may presume, to complete the course or training which Baba had to undergo for reaching perfection of Sainthood or Godhead to fit him for his life's work of transforming all that came into contact with him or that would come into contact with him decade after decade, and it may even be century

after century, into the model of his soul or his own likeness. Love is the one force which upholds the Universe, and love is that force which can overcome the innumerable obstructions to the manifestation of love which arise in our imperfect civilisation between individual and individual, group and group and nation and nation. All bitterness, hatred, rivalries and antagonism will melt into thin air at the contact of powerful love, and such love has to be directed to the world in existing conditions and in increasing measure to enable it to cast aside the darkening clouds that cover it and restore to it the blissful light of love. The ultimate future of humanity cannot be and should not be mere ruin and wreck. It must be an integrated whole, integrated by the force of love.

For that, the proper dynamo that can work upon the world is the dynamo that we call Sai Baba.

In the above three stages, we notice how the dynamo was prepared and fully charged and came ready for this work. It is after leaving Selu that the seeds so well sown in the three periods came to bear full fruition. *Vairagya* means detachment from the world. After leaving Selu, Sai had no one to contact himself with, The world was all before him, where to choose? He went on going through jungle and village hills and deserts, and after some time he came to Shirdi in obedience to the command of his Master that he was to go due west from Selu. Shirdi being due west of Selu on the banks of the river Godavari, Sai Baba came to this place. His first appearance at Shirdi was noticed by Nana Chopdhar's aged mother. In 1900 she declared that Baba came there when she was young. Baba came to Shirdi as a young fearless lad full of *Vairagya*, with a bright beaming face when she was there. After that first visit, Baba was frequently moving about from place to place, and this nomadic stage of Baba may be taken to have ended shortly after he returned to Shirdi with Chand Bhai Patel of Dhupkeda, who was his host for a time at Dhupkeda. Even after arriving with that Chand Bhai Patel's marriage party, Baba was rambling into the jungles as an *Aniketana*, a homeless person. Narada<sup>192</sup> says Saints resort to solitude, sunder worldly ties, have no *mamata* or sense of possession and want no reward and<sup>193</sup> surrender all action to God. They have no homes. Finally Baba took up his

residence at the *Masjid*, later on known as the *Dwarakamayee* even then, If sleeping is the best mark of residence, Baba had no single residence. Baba slept alternate nights at the Mosque and at the *Chavadi*. A Mosque is identified with the Muslim faith. The *Chavadi* is open to all. So Baba even as denoted by his sleeping places was not a Muslim alone but was a Muslim and a cosmopolitan. That is, he could not be confined within the four corners of the Muslim faith. He had to take up his residence at the Mosque for the very excellent reason that the only other temple that he could occupy, namely, the Hindu Khandoba temple, was barred and banned to him by Mahlsapathy the man in charge of it. Baba's first idea was to stay at least for a time at the Khandoba temple outside the village, but when he remarked that it was an excellent place for a hermit like him to reside, Mahlsapathy objected and said that a Muslim as Baba seemed to be would not be allowed to put his foot into that Hindu temple and hence he was driven to choose the mosque. It was Hobson's choice. Here at the outset we find him faced with Hindu-Muslim antagonism. Baba's whole life was the conquest of this antagonism, which is best typified by what happened to Mahlsapathy himself. The very man who objected to Baba putting his foot into Khandoba's temple was the first to worship Baba and make him his *Guru*; so that Baba's feet far from soiling or tainting Khandoba's temple would be sanctifying it. And Baba did visit Khandoba's temple many a time thereafter, for example, when Upasani Maharaj was doing his *japa* or *dhyana* there. Baba had to stay in the Mosque as stated already, as temples are said to be the best place for hermits, and no other temple would accommodate Baba but the Mosque. Allah is the same as Khandoba in Baba's view. It was thus that the dilapidated Mosque became his residence, and perfected his aloofness from the world.

The extent to which the nomadic habits of Baba helped his development has only to be guessed. Such habits have the great advantage of preventing attachment and promoting independence and *Dhriti*, that is courage and self possession which are very essential for a great soul force like Sai Baba. And *Narada Bhakti Sutra*<sup>192</sup> says, He who resorts to lonely places sunders all ties of the world, rises above the three *gunas Satva, Rajas* and *Jamas* and gives up all

sense of possession. *Bhakti* is gained by surrendering all sense pleasure and contact with the world<sup>194</sup>. But Nature after all puts a limit to the youth and versatility of the human body. In Baba's case, the nomadic habits must naturally have ceased with his increasing contact with the villagers of Shirdi and with the development of his service to people and their *bhakti* to him. *Bhakti* has different manifestations in youth and old age, as is seen in the lives of many saints. Even in a great saint like Sai Baba, there is a marked difference between the thoughts and activities of youth and those of his advanced age. The exuberance of the emotional side in youth comes out in saints in a slightly different way from that in which it emerges from the wordly people. Baba's pure heart, quite as much as the young lover's heart, required some scope for its manifestation and exercise. Students of the *Chaitanya Marga* would note how in the earlier portion of a *bhakta's* life, the soul comes out in a highly emotional manner. Sobs, tears, raving, dancing, and knocking about in apparently lunatic fashion, are the characteristics of budding *Bhakti*. Srimad Bhagavata enquires<sup>195</sup>

*Katham Vina Romaharsham dravata chetasa vina*

*Vina anandascrukalaya seudhyet bhaktya vina ascayah.*

that is, Without the *Ashta Bhavas*<sup>196</sup> manifesting the exuberant flow of love towards God, how can the heart get pure? The full force of youth will make the young *bhakta* dance about and give full scope for the inner *bhakti* to work itself through nerves, blood vessels, muscles, throat, and the whole frame. The *Bhagavata* verse means that it is only by yielding to such a complete manifestation of love, the heart can forget the lures of the world. Baba in the earlier years used to visit the *Takia* which was a place for travelling Muslims arriving at Shirdi to rest. At nights, he would tie *salangai* or tinklets to his feet and sing rapturous songs with *kanjira* in hand. He would sing songs of Kabir, Arabic and other songs, giving him full scope for expressing his overflow of love. This trait was in him for many decades after he had stopped his nightly dance at the *Takia* for, in 1910, when Rangari of Thana visited him, he mentioned that the singing of holy songs by the devotees the previous night, drowned him. He expressed that with the words, They abused me'. Rangari said, 'As music goes

on, the *bhakta* will be lost in joy and tears and in various other ways', which Baba entirely endorsed as what he meant by the words? 'They abused me.' Therefore, in the earlier preparation or development of Baba, music played the necessary part, and the many sided perfection of his soul, we may presume, was the one which great mystics have reached through music also. Tyagaraja says,

*Geetartamu Sangeetanandamu Nita Ulo Unnadi*

which means, O Maruti, the aim of the Bhagavad Gita or of songs and the bliss of Music are within your self, Rama remarks to Mamti. Baba was obviously completely absorbed in the God idea; and that idea takes at one time the form of the dancing and flute playing God Krishna, and at another the form of the fighting Rama. Baba had many of those aspects of God, and developed every power necessary for his life work. As for the subsequent development, it is enough to mention that some milestones appear to be indicated by Baba<sup>197</sup>. Baba refers to his obtaining *Sakshatkara* of God and consequently giving up his practice of administering herbs and drugs for the cure of disease, and beginning the administration of only *udhi* and *Asirvada*. We may take it that the perfect *laya* trance of concentration that he enjoyed resulted in *Sakshatkara*. But that cannot be the only flower or fruit that *laya* or trance yields. In the Bhagavata<sup>198</sup>, after describing how perfect *laya* is obtained by concentrating on God, Sri Krishna adds that, as part of the results of such *laya*, various *siddhis* accrue to the person enjoying the *laya* or trance concentration. *Laya* makes the human divine at least for the *nonce* and then the human having become divine, the divine powers, capacities and nature naturally stick on to the human. Thus Sri Krishna explains how the various *Ashtaiswaryasiddhis* or eight *siddhis* as part of divine nature pass on to the person who is enjoying the divine nature by *laya*. The other ten, the total number of *siddhis* is 18 are said to be the offspring of *Gunas*, that is various qualities of the *Jiva* and, therefore, their manifestation in the body of the devotee who is having perfect trance or *laya* naturally follows. Baba therefore having had one fruit namely, *Sakshatkara*, had also other fruits, namely, various *siddhis* such as the power of turning water into oil, which is called

Yatha sankalpa Samsiddhih

that is achieving all desires and *Swechcha Marana*, the power to give up life at will referred to in Bhagavata Skanda<sup>199</sup>. This power was exhibited by him in 1886 when he told Mahlsapathy that he would leave the body to go and see Allah, but that he might return three days later or might not. The power to return to the body, Resurrection, is another *siddhi*. The power to be anywhere *Apratihata* and do whatever one wants are other powers mentioned in the same chapter and Baba exhibited several of these in his dealings with the devotees prior to 1886. Therefore, we may take it that *siddhis* or the extent of *siddhis* alone would not furnish a proper criterion for dividing Baba's life into different periods. It is rather the work which he sought to accomplish with the aid of those powers that ought to be the criterion. Baba upto 1886 was apparently not working for the grand aim of infusing love into all and turning out on a large national scale the approachment of all persons to promote Hindu Muslim unity and other unities. So, 1886 marks an epoch. We may call it the noticeable starting of his Mission.