

R. B. PURANDHARE

We have already dealt with this matter in part. Of the order possible among Sai's lovers as regards the order of chronology, and the order of merit, all the orders luckily coincide in the case of Bayyaji Bai, the first and the greatest lover of Baba. Tatya Patil comes second both chronologically and in point of merit, that is, the extent of love. The number of lovers of Baba after Tatya is too great to discover any chronological arrangement among them. On the other hand, we are obliged to pick up some cases in which there is a good account of the experiences of such a lover of Baba. For that reason, we might take up R. B. Purandhare as an example. Possibly there may be others who far exceeded him in love for Baba and who were drawn to Baba before him. In fact, Radhakrishna Ayi and Abdul Nivaskar seem to be brilliant gems of love that came earlier; but of none of them have we got such a good account as Purandhare. Purandhare in a long account of his experiences has given a very interesting and fairly full description of his contact with Baba. We cannot avoid however mixing up Tatya with Purandhare and others, because the line of parallelism and other common features run very much together in these cases.

The great question in the case of the lovers of Baba is, how can we possibly describe the extent of love and its intensity. Love is not a thing measured by a thermometer or by the quantity of good or sacrifices rendered, though all these do count. We may roughly begin a statement of how love works and then deal with Purandhare's case. When two persons are greatly attached to each other we find that no other expression would describe the situation than love. Friendship,

admiration, gratitude, loyalty, faithfulness, regard, worship, all these blend together in many a case, as it did in Purandhare's case also. So, let us begin an account of how Purandhare's love began.

In the case of most people approaching Baba within the last decade of his life, they were impelled to go to Baba by hearing accounts of Baba. Das Ganu was mostly the source of this inspiration. Das Gnu, though himself not pre-eminent in his love for Baba, had the wonderful charm of eloquence and some amount of real bhakti. He was an expert in the Kirtankars' line, that is, in telling harikathas about saints and holy persons. He generally began with an account of the day's topic, say, Tukaram or Namdev, but he always kept Sai Baba's picture close to him and never failed to refer to Sri Sai Baba as the present day illustration of greatness of the bhakti of the ancient or mediaeval saints. He would say, 'Here is Tukaram's great love and greatness in surrendering to God and getting the most marvellous benefits. If you wish to know if there is any such person now in the flesh who can give you the same benefit, then I will tell you 'Here is this Sai Baba. He is present day representative of medieval saintship. What Ramdas was to Sivaji, that Sai Baba is to innumerable people who approach him in the proper spirit'. Then he would give an account of some of the marvellous lilas and dealings of Baba with his devotees. Thus, besides the fact that thousands attended his kirtan, his account and inspiration would pass on from one to another, and after his kirtan people, having learnt of Sai Baba, would rush to see him. It is rarely that one gets a chance to meet a Tukaram in the flesh, a Namdev in the flesh, and if one gets a chance, surely one does not wish to lose it. so, having heard of Sai Baba from Das Ganu and others. Purandhare's nature was fired with the ambition of contacting Sai Baba. Purandhare's own nature was very simple and highly emotional. He was a plain man and did not care to twist and turn phrases in describing things. When he found that Sai Baba was a powerful saint living in the flesh and was showering benefits like Ramdas. Akkalkote Maharaj and other Samarthas, he naturally wanted to take the earliest opportunity to go to Shirdi and that he did. In his case, going to Shirdi was not an easy matter. he was only a petty clerk on Rs. 35 per month. he had to support a family of four or five including his mother, his wife, his brother and a child. yet, the spark of enthusiasm in his heart did not find these to be difficulties. He fixed upon a certain day to leave for Shirdi, and if we see what he did, we will see exactly what love does. He was naturally to go with his wife and mother. But his young child was unwell and the mother thought that it was foolish to risk taking a little child with fever for such a great distance. Bombay to Shirdi. Yet, Purandhare would not brook a denial of his wishes. He must go and he

would leave and take the child with him inspite of his mother's protest. Look at this! He is taking risks with his only child's health. And what for? To meet the great Sai. The burning enthusiasm of his love for Baba bore down all considerations of ordinary precautions or medial advice and they did go. His love was accompanied by intense faith. So, Baba justified his faith and his love in what followed. When the child was taken with an illness to Shirdi, it quickly regained health instead of suffering. this is a *chamatkar* of Baba and it is these *chamatkars* which first tell upon an emotional mind. Upasani Baba says,

*Aneka Ascruta Atarkysya Lila Vilasam
Samavishkrita Isana Bhasvat Prabhavam*

in his Sai Mahima stotra, composed in 1912. That is Sai Baba's divine or superhuman character was evidenced by innumerable and unheard of miraculous achievements and *chamatkars*. Yet he was

*Ahambhavahinam Prasannatmabhavanam
Namami Iswaram sadgurum sainatham.*

Purandhare found that his child's health far from being ruined by the journey was set right completely at Shirdi. This in itself was sufficient to constitute one of those Aneka Ascruta Atarkysa Lila Vilasaih. here is Baba's superhuman power. here is kindness towards those that flock to his feet. If supreme power and kindness are combined, what more is wanted to give us the idea of God's help? So, Purandhare was made firmer in his faith and deeper in his love of Sai Baba by this occurrence and this was the only one. At every step he had full faith in Baba's omniscience and omnipotence and he found that his faith was fully justified by the subsequent events. Baba knew exactly when Purandhare should start, when he should stay at a place like Nasik, a holy place of pilgrimage, which his mother wanted to visit, and how long he should stay there. When Purandhare acted upon Baba's directions, it seemed to several that he was running foolish risks, but everything that Baba said occurred exactly as he said it would. he was told to stay one day at Nasik and to proceed on the next day. When he went there, he found that cholera was attacking some members of his family, such as his brother, and he was advised to get away. But he remembered that Baba had said that he must stay one day at Nasik. So he did stay. on the next day with ill-health in the family, he found that he was perfectly safe in the following Baba's directions to the very letter. This confirms a man in the extent of reverence and faith that he has in Baba. Reverence and faith combined with thankfulness for the resulting good, form an excellent basis for the development of love. in

this way, his love for Baba got more and more deep-rooted and his faith, being justified, was the means for so many others catching on to that faith. Baba's kindness towards him was remarkable even from the beginning. Why should Baba care so much for this petty clerk who went to Shirdi for the first time? That is the question, which any one would ask. And one would like to know the root of that love. The root of love is not always traceable, but in this particular case we have Baba's own statement to help us. When Purandhare's mother told Baba to look after him, Baba's reply was, "I have known him for generations. I have guarded him from his infancy in front and behind. I will not eat even a bit of food without him". That is, as much as to say that Baba remembered the love relations between Purandhare and himself in former lives.

Purvabhysena Tenaiva Hriyate hyavasopisab
Tatra tam buddhi samyogam Labhate Pourvadehikam

These two are extracts from the Bhagavat Gita constantly quoted to show that purva vasanas, that is, traits in the soul existing in previous births follow one in subsequent births also. In addition to the Bhagavat Gita chapter 16, Verse 10, Baba consciously expressed that love that existed between the two, but Purandhare felt the same love unconsciously and was being pulled to Baba. Baba added no doubt that he draws his devotee's even from thousands of miles away and his drawing is like a boy drawing a bird to whose foot one end of a string is attached while the other is held by him. The bird cannot choose but go to the boy when the boy pulls it. Baba's statement was that he similarly pulled persons who had former contact with him which is Rinanubhandha and Purandhare was expressly one of those greatly attached to him in a former life. that may explain how he run so many risks like taking a sick child to Shirdi from Bombay for the purpose of seeing Baba, with no ostensible gain to explain the risk taken.

having hinted at the origin of the love link between Baba and Purandhare we may proceed to sketch out how this seed of love in the latest janma manifested itself. Purandhare was always giving vent to every emotional feeling strongly. if he felt angry, he would at once burst out in a fit of anger and quarrel. if he felt love, h would be equally ready to express it. Baba had to warn him against his quick temper and thus improve him in respect of this first concern. Baba used his emotional nature for developing love. Conferring of benefits is the surest means of the development of love. Baba conferred benefits in a very peculiar, and often in a very mysterious way. The manner of

benefits being conferred as well as the nature of the benefit being conferred, tended to equally develop the mysterious elements of love.

Purandhare was a poor clerk as we have already stated, and had no worldly financial ambitions. He was living as a tenant in some house and had to face a lot of trouble in consequence. Now we will take the first remarkable benefit Baba conferred on him. When we love a child we love to adorn it's body with fine clothes and ornaments etc., When Baba, with His wonderful powers loved Purandhare, He could not endure the idea of this good fellow being ill-treated by all those whom he had to contact in occupying a rented house. So, the first thing that struck Baba was that He should make this poor clerk own a bungalow of his own. The idea that a clerk on Rs. 35 monthly salary could purchase a plot of land and build a bungalow on it was so queer that Purandhare could not think of it. Yet, very early in his contact with Baba, Baba told him definitely, 'Bhav, you had better buy a plot of land and build a bungalow on it'. Purandhare naturally thought it was beyond practical politics, and he could not act upon it. Baba was impatient. When Purandhare went to Him again and again without building the house.

Baba got provoked and even threw stones at him. Baba told others, for instance, Bade Baba, to go and tell this R.B. Purandhare, whom He called 'Ram Bhav', 'Ask that man whether he thinks me to be a man or a beast? Why does he not act on my words?' When Bade Baba came and asked Purandhare and found out what Baba's advice was, he also thought that it was not a question of practical politics for this Rs.35 clerk to buy land and build a bungalow on it. Similarly, Baba complained to Nana Chandorkar and Kaka Dixit about this intransigent devotee and told Nana to ask that fellow whether he thought that Baba was a man or a beast. When Nana Chandorkar went to Purandhare and asked him what Baba referred to, Purandhare frankly told him the situation. Then Nana went back at once to Baba's feet and said, 'This matter is beyond his means; if you so desire, we will build a house for him and give it to him'. Baba's reply was most remarkable, he said, 'I do not want anybody else to pay for it'. There is a lot of money of this Ram Bhav in My Sirkar and I alone will enable him to build. Nana could not understand how this Sirkar was going to work, and there the matter seemed to end. But Baba kept on digging into Purandhare.

At last it occurred to Purandhare that he might get at least a site. There were plenty of sites available at Bandra. A site in a place far away from popular quarters would be fairly cheap. Anyhow even that price was unavailable. At once that friend instead of saying anything

else came and placed the money before him so that he could at once take the plot. Purandhare asked whether he should execute a document for the money and what interest he should pay. That friend declined to have any document or any terms. He simply said, 'Go on; build, Let every other thing wait'. Purandhare then bought the land and secured the title deed for the land. So he had taken one step in the direction in which Baba wanted him to move. But it is one thing to have a site and a totally different thing to have a bungalow built on it. Those who have built bungalows know to their cost that actual building far exceeds the original estimate. Purandhare was faced with further difficulties. He did not build. But when he went up to Baba without building it, Baba got angry with him and found fault with him for everything and for nothing. The conduct of Baba seemed to be to others most unaccountable.

For instance, on the Ram Navami celebration of Baba's day, Purandhare and a friend of his were commissioned to regulate the huge crowds that were flowing towards Baba to take darshan. Purandhare did his best to reduce the force on the confluence towards Baba. But Baba got angry and said, 'You fellow, you did not give Me peace whether I am in Mosque or elsewhere. You allow these people to rush at Me and give Me no peace'. This was obviously an unreasonable remark, for Purandhare had done his very best. The crowds in those days were so huge that procession of the darshan seekers would extend for many furlongs from the mosque where Baba sat. It is not possible for one or two fellows to control such a huge crowd; Still Baba got angry and severely threatened him with punishment of all sorts. Baba said that He would even bury him in the Mosque at His own feet with His own hands. The way in which Purandhare put up with this apparently unreasonable treatment is evidence of the strong love that was growing in His heart.

Love endureth all things. Love does not blame. Love does not find fault. So he quietly endured without offering a word of explanation for all this treatment. Then Baba treated him in a different way. Having exhausted the threats and abuses, Baba inflicted on him, by His own mysterious means, a severe neuralgic headache, which Purandhare went on enduring, nights and days. Once Bade Baba came and asked Baba to give Purandhare some palliative, Baba simply said, 'That fellow would not listen to me'. Then Bade Baba said, 'He is working heart and soul in your service. So kindly give him some treatment'. No treatment given to Purandhare would give him relief. It was not Baba's idea to give him relief till he finished his building. So all the time he stayed at Shirdi, he suffered intense pain. He was asked to go back his

home and carry on his work. Purandhare went home fully convinced that this headache inflicted by Baba would only cease, as Baba said, after he built the house. How is he to get the money?

It occurred to him that the office lent to the establishment some sums for building purposes for building a tenement. So he applied and got from his office a sum of Rs. 500 and got ready some materials like bricks, etc., for building the bungalow. He was too unwell to look to the building. So his brother went up and looked after the building work. Quick building is jerry building and is bound to have serious defects. The wada or bungalow that was put up in the course of a month by Purandhare's brother was built so hastily that in a short time, in a year or so, there were cracks on the walls. It must be remembered that the building was built on agricultural land without any settu or hard foundation. Evidently the hasty foundations laid for this wada were insufficient to keep the walls together and in perpendicular position. So cracks developed. Anyhow it was built rapidly in a month, and Purandhare with his orthodox ideas wanted to do Vastupuja himself on the building before occupying it. So he went up and did Vastupuja and strangely enough, only after he went and occupies this bungalow, his neuralgic headache ceased.

Here is a strange instance of Baba's Love forcing a man to get a bungalow when he could hardly afford it. There were other defects besides this jerry building. The site was a lonely site in the midst of a waste. There were no neighboring houses to give one safety of company. Purandhare was simply afraid of that, with young wife and child at home, things were not safe, especially when he went away to his office. Baba told him however, 'Don't you be afraid. I am there guarding your wife all the time'. This was found to be true, because, though Baba's form was not always seen, no danger befell this family living a solitary life in the midst of a waste.

Now let us examine this method of exhibiting love. When we have a person, we want to confer benefits. Baba loved Purandhare and was conferring a bungalow on him. But in what way? By first violent abuse, threats and finally by inflicting prolonged pain, which was hard to endure. anyone else other than Purandhare would have doubted whether the game was worth the candle, whether it was worthwhile getting a bungalow after enduring all this trouble and taking the burden of loans which he could only repay very slowly on account of his very low pay. yet Purandhare, being a sincere enthusiastic lover, never questioned Baba's kindness or omniscience or guardianship of himself and family and never complained to anybody. When he was in

the worst pangs of head ache, he simply wrote to Radhakrishna Ayi, "Tell mother Baba that I am unable to endure this pain and that he must kill me and take me to his feet or cure me"" But what could poor Ayi do? Baba was adamant and had his own way and did succeed in making a petty clerk own a bungalow and that too in double quick time. This is one good instance of Baba's forcing benefit on those whom he loved and loves. Baba's conferring of benefit could be found in every direction.

This Purandhare had a lot of financial difficulties and official troubles. He knew so little of how to provide for every contingency. Baba anticipated everything and gave him mysterious warnings in dreams and visions, and enabled him to go through all ordeals without breaking under them. We will take one example. When he went back from Shirdi to his house in Bombay, his wife contracted cholera, and there were so many motions so as to thoroughly exhaust her. the doctor who came and examined her found the pulse feeble and the breath very slow. So he gave up hope and went away. But Purandhare was not the man to give up hope and faith. He knew his God was the Shirdi Sai and with the fullest faith, he went about and found Baba suddenly standing in front of the Maruti temple near his house. Baba told him. 'Don't be afraid; give her udhi and tirtam' and disappeared. Purandhare acted boldly on that advice. He had udhi with him, took up some tirtham and mixed up the two, administered that cold water to the patient. Some others got frightened and said that he should not do this as it would aggravate the disease. But Purandhare's faith in Baba was unshakable and he did give this mixture. With what result? In an hour's time, the sick lady had drunk up all the water and after a little time her breath began to revive strongly. Her body heat began to revive also. Her facial expression improved very much. When the doctor came thereafter, he said that he noticed a very remarkable change for the better and that there was much hope of the patient's recovery. He asked what was the medicine given to her. Purandhare's reply was 'Nothing but udhi and tirtham'.

Benefits conferred on Purandhare were innumerable and they varied in their character. All of them were founded upon Baba's wonderful, unseen guardianship and the exercise of superhuman powers of guarding his dear ward or devotee from all trouble. We should just give an instance of some of these other benefits and stop.

Purandhare was anxious always to be with his object of love. That is the characteristic of love. So, he tried to go to Shirdi as often as possible. Baba objected to that and told him that he need not go to

Shirdi so often. Baba told him to work in company with H. S. Dixit, and the two generally went together. Dixit was at the top of the ladder, rich, influential, famous, highly learned and commanding respect from every one. Purandhare was the exact opposite of all this and yet Purandhare in his anxiety, would try to go along with Dixit every time the latter went. This of course exposed him to some risks on some occasions. Baba detained him at Shirdi far beyond the extent of his leave. On one such occasion, the Foreman of his office asked him for an explanation and threatened him. Purandhare's defiant reply was, 'Here is my resignation. Take it'. Purandhare was so sensitive. His superior Mr. Wilson knew all about his relations with Baba and asked him where he was overstaying his leave. Purandhare's reply was, 'With Baba'. Wilson knew at once that without Baba's permission neither Purandhare nor anybody else should leave Shirdi and so he tore up his resignation and told the Foreman that Purandhare was not his subordinate, much to the chagrin of that Foreman.

On one occasion, Purandhare was anxious to run to Shirdi. But during the night Baba appeared in a dream and told him, 'Beware, if you come I will hit you. Do not come. Why should you come so often? I am not away from you. I am with you. Do not play the fools.' He was wondering why Baba forbids his visit. But he obeyed the order. The next morning there was a strike among the labourers in his mill, and he discovered that Baba was right for, had he gone away, the superior officials would think that Purandhare was at the bottom of the strike and had got away to hide the fact. But as he remained at the station, he was not suspected and he was obviously innocent of any sympathy with the strikers. Instances of this sort in which Baba conveyed advice and warning are too numerous to be fully described. They all tended to confirm Purandhare's idea that his living God was this Shirdi Baba and he was perfectly safe in following his advice and directions.

A description of any two human beings who are more or less the same level is difficult enough but if of the two beings, one is a common place, ordinary, man-in-the-street and the other is a high, spiritual, moral and imaginative soul, the description of relations becomes extremely difficult. We can only describe what we understand. Sai Baba's nature was so peculiar, so weird, that any attempt to grasp his nature is bound to be hopeless. Sri Diwakar in his Foreword to Kaparde's diary says, 'From what is known of Sai Baba, he was a phenomenon. Many had very close contacts with him', but none could know him, much less explain him. More than a dozen years ago, when this author was studying Baba – a Satpurusha, one Dr. Jal came and told him, 'What? You are trying to understand a Satpurusha. That is

impossible. Give it up?' There is certain amount of truth in these declarations, but we can never deal with any subject unless we know something of it, however infinitesimal and insignificant a part it may be. If we do not have even a rough idea of it, how can we talk of it or write of it? So, though Baba could be known, he is understood in a vague and very partial way, and that is part of the necessity of the case. This statement applies also to other great souls like Jesus Christ, Tennyson says of him,

Thou seemest human and divine,
The Highest Holiest Manhood Thou;
Our wills are ours we know not how;
Our wills are ours to make them thine.

According to Emerson, humanity and divinity run into each other and can never be separated. But in point of practice they are far apart, poles apart and attempts to deal with them on the same level proves to be a wretched failure. All the same we have started the task of describing the love between an ordinary human being like Purandhare and a divine being like Sai Baba. So we must proceed further on with this task of trying at least to present some of the features of this love.

The features of love between ordinary human beings are fairly well-known. We find these features repeated in the inter-relation between a divine or semi-divine person and an ordinary human person. One of the best instances of love or friendship indistinguishable from the love described in English poetry is the instance of Tennyson's love of Arthur Hadlaw, which is the subject of the poem 'In Memorium'. There are some hints given. One interesting hint is that the two natures grow more and more alike and almost blend into one. The two friends or lovers nature grow more and more alike and blend into one. One very interesting passage is how the thoughts of both the friends ran simultaneously into the same groove or the same point. Says Tennyson,

When each by turn was guide to each
And fancy light from fancy caught,
And thought leapt forth to wed with thought,
Ere thought itself could with speech.

This is quite striking and this has been noticed as a feature of the relation of ordinary souls even with Mahatmas. When this author was living at Tiruvannamalai, he and Yogi Ramayya would come down from the hill to meet Ramana Maharishi in his ashram and not infrequently

the thought that was stirring their mind would be found to be part of the talk at the Ashram. When Maharishi was asked for an explanation about it he simply said, "There are some peculiar psychological laws about the working of the human spirit. They may account for it. Instances of thought leaping forth to wed with thought are found in Purandhare's account of his own experiences with Baba. In about 1915, Sai Baba was seriously ill. he could not move about without being supported. He was suffering from severe exhaustion and his body underwent a great deal of suffering. Strangely enough, at that time, Purandhare came to the railway station thinking that he would start and go with his wife and mother to their village. But when he came to the station, his mind turned. he asked them to go to their place, and he himself wanted definitely to go to Shirdi, much to the chagrin of those ladies. Purandhare left Shirdi despite their protests, and what did he see there when he went to Shirdi? He found that Baba was in severe physical pain and apparently in serious danger. Purandhare says, 'At that time in 1916, Baba and Radhakrishna Ayi were both ill. After I reached Kopergaon the tongawalla, Hassan carried the news to me. I asked him to take me straightway to Shirdi and I reached the place at about 8.45 or 9 a.m. I could hear the heavy breathing of Shree as I approached his residence. I went near him and cried. All the visitors were seated. When I ascended the steps looking up to him, he said, "Bhav! Have you come? I feel exhausted. Do not leave me now. I have been expecting you for the last three or four days. I told Kaka also. Go and stay with Radhakrishna Ayi. Do not leave the place." I went there but she too was ill. Sree at that time had grown very weak having had no food. But otherwise his daily routine had not changed in any way. he had to walk supported by two or three persons. his bhiksha was being conducted as usual. one day when he was going to Lendi, I offered to carry him. I could not help weeping then. Sree told me not to cry for. "In two or four days, I will be well. Allamia had out me to pain, which I must endure. Do not cry on that account. Why should you? For two days we have to face good or bad events. We ought not to fear."

Here we see how the unity of spirit between Purandhare and Sai Baba plays. Firstly, when Baba thought that Purandhare should be sent for Shirdi and asked Kaka to write to him. Purandhare had already had the thought in his mind. Baba wanted him near on account of his health. but the love had worked in Purandhare's mind and inaccountably he wanted to start for Shirdi without knowing what was the particular necessity for his going. Here is thought leaping forth to wed with thought, 'ere thought itself could wed with speech. Again the unity of spirit between two intimate companions , friends or lovers, is seen in

this. Baba on account of weakness and asthmatic trouble was breathing hard and undergoing pain. his weakness prevented him from walking erect and unsupported as usual, and Purandhare looking at both these facts cried and cried for he could not bear to see Baba in pain. This is a very high degree of love, and Baba had to reason with him and console him and make him desist from weeping.

Love does not merely show itself in strong fellow-feeling, but manifests itself by the sacrifices made. Purandhare was prepared to make any sacrifice and be with Baba to bask in his presence and he would put up with any treatment, however painful, from Baba which others would rebel against. On one occasion, when he took creepers to make alley on both sides of Baba's walk from his Masjid, in the chavadi, and Lendi, he got the creepers with great trouble. They were precious creepers, they were. But Baba did not care a brass button for alloys and flowers and all that. So when he took the creepers, Baba refused to give him permission to plant them. For three days the creepers withered not being cared for, Purandhare's heart was aching like anything. His sorrow at the idea of losing this enterprise of planting an alley and his sorrow at the withering or the death of the creepers was intense. Baba inspite of his vairagya and indifference to alleys and planting creepers could not be indifferent to the pain of this loving Purandhare. So, he told him finally not to have any fears and promised that even if the creepers were withering, he would make them thrive again with his wonderful mystic powers and finally granted permission after three days of withering. Strangely enough, the creepers were planted and inspite of the loss of time, the plants grew up.

Another very interesting manifestation of love is the taking of liberties. In the case of Purandhare, the taking of liberties was in the following case. Tatya Patil's taking liberties is mentioned in a different place in H. S. Dixit's diary in a letter from Narke. But here we are dealing with Purandhare. Purandhare and his friends had, with great enthusiasm and trouble, secured for Baba's picture a silver palanquin with silver ornament tacked on to the top of the same, but, when these were brought by the loving and enthusiastic devotees, Baba, who hated all pomp and pageantry and rated them at their proper worth, refused to allow the palanquin to be brought into his mosque as Baba himself would not sit in a palki. He said, 'Let it remain outside, and so the whole night the palki remained outside without any watchman. During the night some thieves came and made away some of the silver horses. In the morning the much distraught devotees ran to Baba and complained about the theft. Baba simply said, 'Why did the thieves not

take away the whole palanquin?' Baba had so much contempt for wealth. But the devotees would not give up their own notions as to the need for wealth and pomp to set off Sai Baba as a real Maharaja, a Prince with all sorts of appurtenance like silver palanquin. So, Radhakrishna Ayi and Purandhare resolved that the palanquin should be provided with a garage and they determined that the place to the next to the mosque on one side should be turned into a garage to safely lock up the palanquin. They could put up pillars on one side of that space and lean rafters thereon, but to make the rafters rest on the other side they had to put in support which should be inserted into the wall of the mosque to support the roof. No one would dare to do it, because it involved digging into the walls of the mosque, that is, boring holes, about four or five of them. It is a downright desecration to bore holes in a wall of a mosque or a garbagraham, which has only three walls and no Hindu would think of defiling a garbagraham by such an unholy act. No orthodox Muslim would put up with the idea of boring holes in mosque wall merely to support the adjoining garage rafters. But Purandhare had no alternative. He got up boldly and dug holes in the wall and inserted the pieces of wood. By that time Baba, who had gone out, returned and he was furious. He said, 'Purandhare. You want to break my mosque wall?' Purandhare bowed to him and explained that the wall would be safe that only three of four pieces of wood would be inserted. But Baba refused permission. Here comes the liberty taken by the spirit of love. Purandhare determined to continue his work for honouring Baba with a silver palanquin and a garage, and did not mind his orders. Baba was cursing and swearing, all to no purpose, Purandhare continued his work unmindful of his meal or that he was detaining his mother and wife from having their meal by reason of his absence. But Baba's heart was pained. He could not endure to see Purandhare toil away without caring for his food and without caring for his mother and wife who were starving. Baba at last gave in. His love overcomes his orthodox objections as regards desecrating the wall. He told the people that this rascal of a Purandhare was making himself and others suffer by keeping away from food and not listening to his words. Finally Baba said, 'Purandhare, go and eat' But Purandhare would not. he said, 'Baba, If I go away, you will undo all my work.' Then Baba had to promise that he would not undo the work done. It is only after that Purandhare got down and went to his quarters for a meal. Then Baba said, referring Purandhare, 'What is to be done? If a child passes motions on our thigh, do we kill the child or cut off the thigh? We have simply to put up with it.' This is a very apt description of the relation between Purandhare and Baba. Purandhare was the petted child who would take liberties of Baba and Baba did forgive his tortuous digging into

the mosque wall for the sake of providing a wretched palanquin with a garage. The incident was insignificant. But it brings out the power of the love existing between Baba and Purandhare by showing the liberties the devotee takes and the extend of Baba's forgiveness, due to the strength of his love.

We may proceed from Purandhare's instance to deal with other instances of Baba's sacrifice. Sacrifice is the test of love. Purandhare would sacrifice anything to got and be with Baba. He would run official risks to be with Baba even without leave, for the risk of earthly good was nothing to him when compared with joyful company of Baba. Next let us take the sacrifice made by Baba. Baba's sacrifices are indescribable. Baba had immense powers. He knew everything everywhere. He knew what troubles were being undergone by devotees and what dangers awaited them in every place. It is no doubt a grand feat for one to be able to know what takes place with so many devotees at the same time. But to proceed next to guard each devotee and help each devotee at each place is a task that stuns the human mind. No human being can possibly be watching one at Poona one at Bombay, one at Bandra and hundreds of others in various places and providing the safety needed for them all. What was the safety granted by Baba? He assured people that he would even save them from death. He would save them from Government prosecution. He would save them from the danger of missing their trains and hardships on the way. For all these purposes, he would watch numerous devotees and various people and provide for their safety. To take one small instance, Abdul Rangari's carriage broke down on the road to railway station far away from Shirdi in the middle of the night, and Rangari, his wife and children were on the road absolutely helpless. But was he really helpless? Baba's superhuman eye and superhuman love were upon him. Baba saw the whole thing from his Shirdi residence with his own wonderful powers. He sent a jutkawalla on that road asking him to cry out, Thanawalla, Thanawalla, for a Thanawalla's cart had broken down and left him stranded on the road helpless at midnight. So, a tongawalla came shouting Thanawalla, Thanawalla, to the place where Rangari was, and told him of Baba's instruction. Rangari was wonder-struck at the extend of Baba's knowledge and kindness. So, he got into the cart sent so mysteriously and kindly by Baba, and went back to Baba and found Baba waiting for him.

Baba would watch people in far away places like Poona and Bombay. Nana Chandorkar, a fat stout gentleman, and Lele Sastri, his companion, were in a *tonga* coming from Poona, and on the road, the horse reared and upset the carriage. Both the corpulent men were

tossed down. Baba at that time was in his mosque and he, putting his hands in front of his mouth, make a *sankham* sound, that is, a dolorous warning about the approach of death. He said, 'Nana is about to die. But will I let him die?' Then what happened was that Baba, by the use of his mysterious powers, saved both the corpulent gentlemen from any injury to life and limb. They picked themselves on the road, and they came later on to Baba to learn that Baba at that time when death and danger faced them had known that fact and averted both death and danger. The knowledge is wonderful. the exercise of power is wonderful. But yet more wonderful is to save his devotees

As Baba said, his nights were not intended for sleep. On the other hand with his divine eye of supervision, he was keeping watch over all his bhaktas in all their places and averting danger from them. Look at this vast unimaginable task of one person trying to save hundreds in hundred different places. The task is simply unimaginable. No human being could ever succeed in it. It is the divine Baba that could do it and that did it. His divine power enabled him to do it and his divine kindness made him forego sleep and all comforts for that purpose. the sacrifice of physiological well-being by giving up sleep night after night, was very serious, but Baba willingly consented to do it. Baba's body was human, though his soul was divine. Baba had to undergo all the physiological evils of protracted loss of sleep and loss of comforts. He told G. S. Khaparde, on the occasion of his first visit in 5-12-1910.

We reached Shirdi about 4 p.m. We put up in the Wada built for the convenience of the people by R. B. Sathe. Madhavrao Despande was very obliging and helped us and treated us like guests. There are in the Wada, Tatyasaheb Nulkar with his family. Bapusahib Jog, and Babasahib Sahasrabuddhe. We all went to see Sayin Maharaj soon after our arrival. he was in the Masjid. after salutation I and my son offered the fruits brought by us and gave some money at his request. the Sayin Saheb then said, that he used to eat only barely cake and take little water. he showed his food and pointed to a small sore, saying it was the string worm. That it had been extracted but the string had snapped inside and then it had reappeared again. he said he heard that it would not be well with him till he went to his native town. he said he kept it in view, but that was all. He cared more for his people than for his own life. He said he found no rest as people troubled him. It could not be helped. Then he told us to withdraw, which we did. Towards evening he passed by the Wada, and we went and saluted him. I and Madhavrao Despande went together. After we saluted, he said, 'Go to the Wada and sit quiet.' So, I and Madhavrao returned. We all sat talking. They have many miracles to relate.

Baba really cared more for the welfare of his children than for the safety of his body. Baba however was both human and divine. His body underwent serious damage by reason of the sacrifices he made. Especially in a rude village where people had little imagination and less civilization, his comforts were cut down mercilessly. To make up for the loss of a whole night's sleep, he had the yogic power to recoup his energies by spending one hour in sleep after the noon-meal. But was he allowed to have that rest? Here is an instance.

Syamkarna, a horse, was presented to Baba's Sansthan, for the sansthan requires a horse. A rustic was sent to the village to fetch the horse. He returned and demanded his wages from Radhakrishna Ayi who referred him to Shama. Shama in turn said, 'Go and ask Baba'. The rude idiot ran up to the mosque at the time when Baba was taking his rest after the noon meal and bawled out loudly saying, 'Give me my wages for bringing the horse'. Here comes the human element. Baba was losing the very little rest that he got by this rustic's idiocy. He got angry, took up a brickbat and flung it at the man. The stroke hit the man on the head and fetched blood. The man bawled out that he was being killed for asking his wages. There were policemen in the village of Shirdi and they would be only too ready to seize an opportunity to launch a complaint against Baba and screw out as much money as possible from him. H.S. Dixit was on the spot and scented the danger. He sent for the rustic and told him the absurd mistake he had committed in disturbing Baba's sleep and gave him Rs. 200 wherewith he could buy a cart and a horse and become a carriage driver instead of being a miserable cooly that he was then. The man jumped at the offer and the danger of prosecution was averted. We see here the human element. Baba himself noted that element his *gosttis*. Referring to his human system he said, there are two parts of it. One is spirit and the other is flesh. The latter he called *matti*, which means clay. He said sometimes *matti* was up and anger broke out. This is exactly what happened in the above case. The human element. The human element could not be banished, and so Baba got angry and flung a brickbat. Luckily all is well that ends well, and this incident, far from damaging the man gave him a good fortune, namely, made him a cart driver instead of continuing his life as a cooly. But the point here is that Baba had his human side. Therefore, the extent of sacrifice he made on human side for pleasing and helping his devotees was so grand that the sacrifice made by Purandhare and others could never be compared to the infinite sacrifices made by Baba.

There is above all another and a higher sacrifice which people do not know of – the sacrifice of a thorough Jnani in taking on the human constitution and carrying on work in the phenomenal world and entirely giving up the idea of resting in pure Atman without any care or sorrow, that is, securing Brahma Nishta or Santi. This is a very great sacrifice. No other sacrifice equals it. But people do not see it in the light of sacrifice. Baba on the other hand derived pleasure out of bonds of love. He had a mission to fulfill and therefore he took birth to help devotee after devotee in every matter, temporal and spiritual. This involves a definite resignation of all hopes of Shanti, Shanti, Shanti, and a definite signing of oneself to samsaric life. Nana Chandorkar told Baba that he wanted to be free from Samsara. But Baba retorted that it was an impossible feat and said, "So long as there is the body, there are the prarabdha and samsara with it. Baba added that he himself could not escape samsara. Look at the above description of samsara of Baba. When we are weighed down with the care of providing for one family of a handful of people, Baba's samsara or family consisted and consists of several thousands. Therefore, one can understand the extent and unimaginable magnitude of the sacrifice undergone by Baba. No doubt there is another side to the shield. Batruhari says, in describing Kala, Kala has put Mahavishnu into the enormous trouble of taking ten Avatars.

Vishnu Ena Dasavatara Gahane
Schitto Mahan Sankate

this means, You Kala, by whom Mahavishnu himself was thrown into the tortures of ten births. This is no doubt poetic flair. There is another and better view to be taken about Avatars. For an Avatar to take birth to carry out a mission, not as a result of one's unavoidable purva karma, but out of one's own grace, need not be considered a matter of sorrow at all. It is Iswara that is taking birth, and the Vedas say
Purnam Adah Purnam Idam
Purnat Purnam Udhachyate
Purnascya Purnamadaya
Purnameva Avaschishyate.

this means, The Infinite or Perfect is this the original. And the Infinite or Perfect is the manifestation. From the Perfect, Perfect is taken. In the result, Perfection can suffer no diminution. Iswara is perfect to his happiness and perfect in his power and qualities. So, when an Avatara is taken, still the Infinite, God remains Infinite enjoying Satchitananda. An Avadara is but a reflection or a part of the original God and would still maintain its Satchitananda or perfectly peaceful and blissful state.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

On the manifested side, troubles, tortures and Dasavatara are undergone. Baba was both human and divine and is treated as an Avatar by very large numbers. Baba maintained his Satchidananda in spite of the troubles of his physical body. Once he said, My Mourshad, Guru has taken me away from this body. You can put the whole of this body on fire and I will enjoy the Ganath, fun. That is, his conquest of the I-am-the-body idea was so perfect that like martyrs, whose bodies were burnt, he could still be in joy when the body was perishing. Therefore the sacrifices, great as they appear on Baba's part, might not from his point of view he considered a serious pain.