

Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiva Tarkhad of Poona, is also one of those devotees of Baba who derived very peculiar and very great advantages, mostly in temporal matters, but partly in spiritual matters also and therefore her experiences with Baba's name was through her brother-in-law Sri. R. Tarkhad of Bombay, who was a Director of a mill there. He had been to Baba, and had a very high impression of Baba's power and nature. When he visited his brother's house, he spoke of Baba in terms of high praise, which naturally roused Mrs. Sadasiva Tarkhad's attention for a special reason. Her little child Nalini Tarkhad had taken ill suddenly at the age of 15 months, and she was perplexed as to what to do. Hearing of Baba's fame, she said, 'if Baba is the wonderful Saint that my brother in law stated he is, then he should make the child recover, and if he makes the child recover, the whole family with the child will go to Shirdi and pay their respects to Baba in person.' Very shortly after the vow was made, the child did recover, and so, she, her husband and the child went up to Shirdi. The lady had already a fairly good grounding of religious experience by contact with other Saints and her first impressions of Baba are all the more valuable on that account. She found the most prominent feature about Baba was his eyes. She says,

'There was such power and penetration in the glance that none could continue to look at his eyes. One felt that Sai Baba was reading him or her through and through. Soon one lowered one's eyes and bowed down. One felt that he was not only in one's heart but in every atom of

one's body. A few words, a gesture would reveal to one that Sai Baba knew all about the past and the present and even the future and everything else. There was nothing else to do for one, except to submit trustfully and to surrender oneself to him. And there He was to look after every minute detail and guide one safe through every turn and every vicissitude of life. He was the Antaryami – call him God or Satpurusha In Sahajasthithi or what you like. But the overpowering personality was there, and, in his presence no doubts, no fears, no questionings had any place and one resigned oneself and found that was the only course, the safest and the best course'.

From her first contact, she went on getting experiences of his power, his All-knowing and All-pervasive personality, and all his protecting care shielding her wherever she went at any time whatsoever. She had become Baba's Ankita, by complete surrender with full faith in him. For the benefit of strangers, she was kind enough to give some instances of Baba's Antaryamitva that she could vouch far from personal experiences or from that of some intimate friends. Shirdi was notorious for being infested with snakes and is so even now after lighting arrangements are made. When she went there first, there was no street lighting and no village committee was working. She was walking about at night in the street. But suddenly it struck her that she should stop. There was no sight, no sound, nor object visible to account for her stopping. But somehow she felt she must and in a very short time, a light was brought. Then she saw that if she had taken another single step it would have been over a serpent that was lying there, quiet. But how she managed to stop then, and why the light came, were never explained to her. It was all Baba's grace, his protection and his ever watchful eye over his children. She says that, like this, 'He saved her life again and again on several occasion, both before and after his Mahasamadhi.

One very interesting instance of Baba's Antaryamitva that she gives was in respect of a leper, who came to Baba to take his darsan. The poor man's disease was very far advanced, and he had very little strength. he was stinking all over. It was with great difficulty that he could slowly get up the three steps of the Mosque, and then like every visitor he had to go to the dhuni to pick up the ashes and then give it to Sai Baba, placing his head on Baba's feet. This lady being fairly near, found that his prolonged presence and the intense stench he gave out, was very difficult to bear. At last he moved off, and then she felt relief and said within herself, 'Thank god, He is off.' Sai Baba at once looked at her, sending her a piercing glance. Of course he knew her thought. he ordered the leper to be brought back. The man came.

Slowly he clambered up, full of his stench and bowed again. He was carrying a parcel in his hand – a very dirty parcel. Baba took it up and asked 'What is this.' and opened it. It had pedas. Baba picked up a piece and gave one piece to the lady and put a bit into his own mouth. Baba said to the lady 'eat'. There was no option but to obey and she had to eat it. Then the man was sent back with the rest of the pedas. This is what he wished, that is, that Sai Baba should accept a part of the peda, and return the rest as prasad. Baba satisfied him, though that man had not the courage first when he arrived there, to present the dirty packet to Baba. Baba used the occasion to teach her valuable lessons in humanity, fraternity, sympathy, endurance and trust in Baba's supreme wisdom, which knows when there is danger and when there is none. She did not contract leprosy of course. She declares that whenever they had difficulties to get over, they had simply to stay or stand in Baba's presence, without the necessity to utter a single word. Baba knew at once everything in the minds of his children, and would do the needful himself. She gives one instance.

They had taken their servant with them, who was suffering from pain in the waist. as there was no hospitals at Shirdi, her husband went up and stood before Baba. At once Baba said, 'My whole leg is paining. The pain is Great'. Someone suggested, 'Why not do something to relieve the pain.' 'Yes' said Baba 'if green leaves are heated and applied over it, the pain will go away.' 'What leaves, Baba?' she asked. Baba said, 'The green leaves near Lendi.' 'Is it korphad?' somebody asked, 'Yes' said Baba, and added, if that is brought, split into two, warmed over the fire and applied, it will do. Her husband knew at once that it was Baba's prescription for their servant and he took up korphad, warmed it over the fire, and applied it to his servant's waist. That man cured.

Baba's saving her from the snake was not the only instance in which she found that Baba was present, invisibly keeping a watch over her and other children in all places. She had other instances also proving the same. As regards her physical health – her eyes were giving her great trouble. She went and sat before Baba. the eyes were paining and water was flowing freely from them. Baba looked at her. Then the eyes ceased to pain and water ceased to flow. But tears were trickling down from Baba's own eyes. The accurate diagnosis of diseases take doctors much time and efforts, and to discover appropriate remedy takes more time and more efforts. In the case of Baba, the diagnosis, the remedy and everything was instantaneous. A deep-seated organic disease abruptly and suddenly got cured; and the power of drawing disease from her to himself by pure will power, was something

marvellous and something uncommon. Few would care even if they have the power to draw disease to themselves.

Baba has declared that he is inside every creature and every object to control all voluntary and involuntary movements. Therefore his declaration, 'I am not at Shirdi' while he was there, should be interpreted as referring to his Antaryami nature. he was not confined to the 3 ½ cubits height of body. We cannot get over the idea that we are the body. But he was ever free from such narrow ideas and attachments. One important difference between Sai Baba and several other saints she had seen, is mentioned by her. Some other saints used to get into the Samadhi or trance condition, and then they would forget their body. They would utter things in the trance state revealing supranormal knowledge or power. but in the case of Sai Baba, he never had to go into trance to achieve anything or reach any higher position. Every moment he was exercising a double consciousness, namely, the Ego called Sai Baba and the Antaryami of all, superseding all egos and resting in the Paramatma. He was at the same time exercising and manifesting the powers and features of both states of consciousness. Some other saints with much trouble would read other man's minds' for a time, and then lapse into their original condition. But with Sai Baba, his knowledge of other people's minds was not a matter of effort. He was in the All-knowing state always. Baba was not without worldly wisdom. he would higggle with cloth sellers and beat down the price of a yard of cloth from 8 annas to 5 annas. People would then suppose what a greedy man Sai Baba was. But when it came to payment, he might pay Rs.40 instead of Rs.15 for the cloth he took, and then people would think that he was a mad man. But he had his own reasons first for the higgling and next for the liberal payment.

His power and nature, being fully understood by her and other similar devotees, made her regard Shirdi as a veritable paradise, a real Bhooloka Vaikuntam. She says,

'Directly as we went there, we felt safe, that nothing could harm us. when I went sat in his presence, I always forgot my pain-nay, the body itself, with all it's mundane concerns and anxieties. Hours would pass, and I would be in blissful unconsciousness of their passing. That was a unique experience shared, I believe, by all his real devotees. He was All-in All and the All for us. We could never think of his having limitations. Now that he has passed away, I feel what a terrible loss it is, as I can know longer pass hours together in blissful unconsciousness time and affairs at his feet. We feel we have lost our soul; our bodies alone are left to us now.'

The lady qualifies her statement next by saying 'Baba has not all together vanished, he is still living now and gives ample proof of his powers and protecting care in many matters off and on, though the impressions about these, because of his body being invisible, are not so great as those that the devotees enjoyed when they sat in his presence at Shirdi.' She gives instance of Baba's miraculous protection and help, even when he was not physically present – before and even long after his Mahasamadhi in 1918.

One instance is this. it was probably in 1915, that she had for over one month a splitting neuralgic headache. A number of remedies were tried, all to no purpose. She felt she must die, and that would be the relief she thought. Anyhow, she thought, 'Why not go and die at Shirdi at Baba's Feet? That would be a privilege.' With that view she started off with her husband and came to Kopergaon from Panchgani where they were staying for the summer. At Kopergaon, they have to cross the Godavari river. Then it struck her, 'Anyway death is to come upon me soon. So, why not have the Punya, merit, of a Godavari bath before death?' So she boldly took a bath in the Godavari – in that cold water. Ordinarily that would intensify the headache and accelerate death. But on this occasion, when she came out of the water, the neuralgic headache ceased and thereafter ceased for ever. This is surely Baba's miracle.

The other instance she cites was in 1927, nine years after Baba's Mahasamadhi. With the rest of the family, she set off to Shirdi. She was in the family way, but anyhow she boldly went for the pilgrimage. After her arrival at Shirdi, the foetus die in the womb. Her own features were turning blue and her blood was getting poison. There was neither midwife nor doctor there. Though some medicines from Ahmednagar were brought, they proved of no avail. Then Mr. Sadasiva Tarkhad went to Sakori and asked Upasani for help. Upasani's reply was 'you have got the best doctor and best nurse over there at Shirdi; why do you come to me?' What happened further she did not personally know, because she became unconscious. Her husband says that in her unconscious condition, she went on speaking and giving directions as to what should be done and the directions she gave were followed in addition to the application of udhi and thirtha of Baba. Then the foetus was expelled along with other matter. For weeks she remain unconscious and at last recovered full consciousness and health. This is nothing but Baba's kind care for his child.

Baba's care and help were also extended to her husband. For sometime, he was the manager of a mill. Then his services were terminated, and he had to remain for a considerable time without any job. He went to Shirdi in the hope that Baba would help him to get a job. But soon after he reached Shirdi, Baba instead of providing him with a job, told him, 'Tatya Patil and others are going to attend a cinema at Ahmednagar. You better go with them and thence go home to Pune.' He felt mortified that, without getting a job, he was asked to attend amusements. Anyhow Baba's order had to be obeyed. He went and attended the cinema and after leaving Nagar, he went to Pune. But what a surprise 'Baba, he thought, had sent him to Pune simply for nothing. But on the other hand at Pune at the mill, a labour strike had broken out. The authorities concerned were anxious to recall him as he was a very capable manager of labour, and they had wired for him to Bombay and other places. Meanwhile Baba knowing of the wire and the situation, had sent him just in time to get his job. So, Baba, appearing to be doing harm, really was conferring a blessing by his seemingly unkind orders.

At times Baba's help to her and to the family appeared to be unkind, but it was really beneficial. In 1915, she and her husband went up to Shirdi. Baba told her to go and put up with Ramakrishna Ayi for accommodation. That lady gave it on the strict condition that Mrs. Tarkhad should carry out all the menial labour that might be ordered by Ramakrishni, who was a Brahmin widow and the latter had a very sharp tongue and would rebuke her for shortcomings. So, Mrs. Tarkhad found that Baba had imposed a very painful position on them, but what was their recompense? She found that Ramakrishni Ayi was possessed of powers of clairvoyance and thought reading. Some message would come for Mr. Tarkhad. At once Ramakrishni, or Ayi as she was called, would read off the reply from Tarabai's mind and send a reply. In other matters also when Baba sent unusual orders, Ayi would have the things ready. Then Ayi related the history of Mrs. Tarkhad's past life. Above all, Ayi lived only for Baba's service. She was very deeply devoted to Baba and rendered very great service to the Sansthan. It was therefore an education in service that she got by staying with her. Mrs. Tarabai Sadasiva Tarkhad noted several facts about Baba, which would be valued by our readers. Therefore, her statement on these matters may be quoted here.

'Baba in the mornings would sit near his dhuni and wave his arms and fingers about, making gestures which convey no meaning to the onlookers and saying Haq which means 'God'. Baba's methods of imparting spiritual benefit were hardly noticeable. He would speak of

god only rarely and that with feeling. His religious practise could hardly be discovered by any one. But Baba's purity, strength, regularity and self-denial were prominent. He would always go and beg his food even during His illness. He would take the begged food and eat only a little of it. the rest would be given away or taken away. Baba's talk would be about *Vanis*, *Telis*, and they looked like meaningless jargon. But it was intentionally so. Baba's words would be understood only by these whom he intended to enlighten.

*Jayamani Jaisa Bhav,
Taya Taysa Anubhav*

says the *arati* song. That is, You get an experience of Baba in accordance with what you think of him. Baba's stoic indifference to comforts was most impressive. He did not care for any comforts, not even for his residence. The Mosque, which was a worthless, rumbling, old and dilapidated building, and though it needed repairs, he put up with. He did not want it to be repaired, and when others tried to repair it, he obstructed their efforts. It was only at night when he went to the chavadi on alternate days, that the reconstruction of the mosque could be pushed through. In one night they had to put up the whole flooring.

Baba had no particular marga, as the yoga marga etcetera. But if any person came to grief in his yoga marga, he could give relief. One yoga sadhaka had bleeding piles and came to Baba and got relief at Baba's hands. His liberality and generosity were remarkable. He would daily get dakshina in three figures; one hundred to three hundreds. He scattered the whole thing away. Bhajan parties and fakirs were liberally supplied when they came up, and they were always coming up. His self control and equanimity were equally remarkable. he had no particular preference of one dish over another, though some people thought he liked mangoes or sira or even country beans. He was accessible at all hours of the day and night to people. He himself said, My durbar is always open at all hours. All his actions were open and above board. there was nothing done in secrecy. He had nothing shameful to conceal and no fear from scrutiny. his most marked feature was perfect calm and total freedom from care and anxiety. He had no interests to serve or protect, no institutions to support, no acquisitions to safeguard and no private property to feel anxious about. With a very large daily income, he left only Rs.16 at the moment of his passing away from his body. He was perfectly just and impartial. He was not obsequious to the rich and highly placed nor supercilious and contemptuous to the lowly. Revenue Commissioners and collectors and lower officials came in large numbers, and D.Os.,

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D.C.s., and Mamlatdars poured in. Also there came the ragamuffins in the street, paupers and beggars *ad nauseam*. He treated them all with perfect equality. Baba's personality was far greater than of any other saint that this devotee had seen.