

S. B. Dhumal may be cited as one of the most ardent bhaktas of Sai Baba, who surrendered himself entirely to Baba with the fullest confidence. He acted in very important matters, official and professional, with full trust in Baba for the success of his efforts. He was a mofussil Pleader, practicing at Nasik and was in fairly prosperous circumstances when he first heard about Sai Baba in 1907, this is, at the age of 34. Even at his very first visit, he was greatly impressed with Baba. His outstanding service to the Sai Sansthan and the Sai-minded public was that he introduced Sriman Gopal Rao Buty, a millionaire of Nagpur to Baba. As soon as he took Buty to Baba, Buty also becomes a devoted follower of Baba. The best remembered and the most memorable service of Buty to the cause of Baba is that he erected a huge stone building called after his name, Buty Wada, and devoted it entirely for the Mahasamadhi shrine of Baba. Baba's Samadhi shrine is in the centre of that house, and all outlaying parts are used as accession thereto. This building must have cost a lakh of rupees.

From 1907 onwards S. B. Dhumal paid repeated visits to Baba and got into contact with him in every conceivable matter. When asked about his experiences, he said, "It is difficult for me to sort out in what matter I am having experiences. Every act of mine, every event in my life, is moulded and directed by Him." He says the one memorable statement of Baba which is the basis of his contact – was Baba's telling him, "At every step of yours, I am taking care of you". Baba added, "If I did not, what will become of you, God knows". The occasion for that statement was very interesting. S. B. Dhumal was sleeping in his own

quarters at Shirdi and in the morning, when he went to see Baba, the later remarked, "*Bhav*, the whole of last night I had no sleep." Dhumal asked, "Why so Baba?" Baba said, "I was thinking and thinking of you all night." S. B. Dhumal was for one thing a young man, full-blooded, with a good practice with plenty of funds and, was a widower without children. Therefore, the thoughts of a person in such a position would run riot and easily lead him astray so as to injure both body and soul. Baba had to look after his thoughts and control them. So, Baba said, "If I do not do so, God knows what will happen to you". Dhumal had certain physical ailments, which also rendered a bachelor's life very necessary and important from the point of view of his welfare. After his wife's death in 1909, his father-in-law, Rao Bahadur Kinkhede, wanted him to marry again and noting that unless Baba gave permission, Dhumal would never agree, he went to Baba. As he approached Baba, Baba's eyes sparkled with anger showing how determined Baba was to repel the idea of marriage. So, he came back and reported that Baba was distinctly against any marriage for S. B. Dhumal.

Baba's love for Dhumal was very great and covered both his temporal and spiritual welfare. Numerous instances throughout his life bear out this proposition. In point of fact, his contact with Baba was right through all the hours of the day and night and all the days of the year. Dhumal says, "There is no incident or event in my life which I do not connect with Baba, however trivial it may appear to be. I firmly believe that everything in my life is swayed by Baba." Dhumal adds that he does not care whether the outside world believes it or not. However, noting that B. V. N. Swami was not a disbeliever, he narrated to him many instances of his life, showing how Baba dealt with him and also gave some hints which may be useful for an earnest reader in trying to get more out of Baba. The best way of understanding Baba is to experience him oneself, he says. "Where is Baba gone? He is still alive and active." This, S. B. Dhumal said in October 1936 and added, "Baba is more active, if that were possible, than he was before *Mahasamadhi*." Anyone in downright earnest can get in touch with him today and at once. But if one will not do that, but wants only second-hand, third-hand or fifth-hand experience, one will get poor stuff. He said, "Experiences get their significance and full force only when uttered in one's mother tongue and face to face and not when put into English and transmitted to the reader through cold print. With this preface, he began narrating some very interesting instances of faith in Baba, being a living and very fruitful faith for the success of his life, chiefly temporal. Chiefly temporal is emphasized here, for many readers are in Dhumal's condition, that is, they are 95 per cent

worldly; and hardly 5 per cent of their time and attention is for things beyond – except of course when using such a divine personality like Sai Baba as a means for achieving all that they want. That, of course, is based upon love, regard and deep attachment. Dhumal had such love, regard and deep attachment to Baba. Baba's purpose and object were to develop that attachment – for the Guru is the only sadhana and becomes a powerful sadhana when the attachment and faith in him are at their height. That is Nishta. To develop Nishta it was that Baba revealed to him what a deep interest he had in Dhumal, and how he was watching him all the night at the sacrifice of his own health and comfort. S. B. Dhumal says, "At this declaration, I was overpowered by a sudden gush of love, gratitude and surprise, feeling which could find no other expression than a free flow of tears. What intense love he had for me! What an amount of trouble he took for my sake! Just as I was always thinking of him. He was kind enough to think of me with this difference. My thought of him, though loving, was weak, and I could render him no real service. But his love was accompanied by such vast insight and such power that I was helped in every act and event." Dhumal found that Baba could and did foresee things far ahead and took every step required to avert the evil and promote the good that was coming to him. There were numerous instances to show this. Only a few of them will be given:

Even from Nasik, Dhumal would write to Shama at Shirdi, in order to be in touch with Baba, as Shama would read all letters to Baba and communicate his replies. But very often, even during Baba's life in the flesh and in every case after Baba's *Mahasamadhi*. Dhumal addressed his queries to Baba mentally or by placing chits prayerfully that is, casting lots before Baba's portrait and invariably the answer he got showed Dhumal what was the correct and safe course to follow. Invariably Dhumal followed that advice. Though persons with commonsense, medical opinion, and prudence objected, still Dhumal followed Baba's advice and invariably discovered that he had followed the right path, the safest and wisest. Dhumal takes up his health first. At Nasik, his ancestral place, plague broke out once. Dead rats were found in the house. Dhumal wrote to Shirdi for permission before he would move out and left the house as soon as the reply was received that he could vacate. Being always under Baba's protection, he felt perfectly safe in remaining till the reply came, as Baba has said, "At every step I am guiding you". So, with fullest knowledge of Baba's powers and love and with implicit reliance on the truth of Baba's words, he remained boldly in the midst of plague until and unless Baba ordered him out. Baba knew everything that was happening every moment and everywhere. Whether it is at Nasik or at any other place,

Baba would never allow any harm to befall Dhumal, as he had placed this child-like trust and entire reliance on Baba. In the 29 years of such reliance, that is, from 1907 to 1936, there was not a single instance where Baba's protection failed or the trust was found misplaced. When he got Baba's reply that he could move to a bungalow at Nasik, he moved. In the very same night that he occupied the bungalow, a dead rat was found. At once, Dhumal wrote to Baba whether he should move away. The answer was in the negative and he did not move. The health authorities and neighbours had contempt for him for violating the rules of prudence. But what was the result? The result always justified his implicit faith in following the guidance of Baba. He continued to stay in the bungalow. Later dead rats were found in his servants quarters, in the house of the neighbourhood and in the very bungalow from which alone all the water had to be drawn for cooking. Then, at once Dhumal wrote to Baba for permission to move and, being sure that the reply would arrive, he started packing up things and carrying them off to go to his house in Bazaar street. When he was there trying to unlock the front door, the postman handed over a letter from Shirdi which ran as follows: Why should we give up our residence? At once, he turned back and went to the bungalow and boldly lived there, taking care to avoid only the infected water of the well where the dead rat had been found. He got all his water from Godavari. No harm came to him by his occupation of the bungalow that Baba had made him stay in, while all round there were 14 to 15 deaths due to plague per day at Nasik.

Baba's help to him and to his family included certain spiritual affairs also. He lost his wife in 1909 and was going on doing *Masik Shraaddha* for her at Nasik. Baba communicated through Shama's letter, "You do your *Masik* here at Shirdi, and I will give your wife sadgati." So, Dhumal went to Shirdi and performed *Masik* there. Baba only asked for Rs. 15 as dakshina and Dhumal gave it. As Baba assured him that his wife got sadgati, Dhumal believed it and every Sai bhakta believes it because Sai Rama has said in Rama's words,

*Anritam Noktapurvam me
Nacha Vakshye Kadachana.*

this means, Untruth I have never uttered before. Nor will I utter at any time. Baba said, "Sitting in this *Masjid* no words of untruth are uttered by Me. Is this a place for uttering lies?" asked Baba. Also in the case of Upasani Maharaj's wife who died in January 1912, it will be remembered that Baba had said that her spirit had come to Him. That means, Baba had given her *satgati*, because Baba is God.

However, Dhumal sought and obtained Baba's help frequently, mostly for temporal and professional matters. Several of them are interesting and so they may be set forth here. About his own profession, the Public Prosecutorship at Nasik was offered to him when he was quite prosperous. Dhumal wrote to Shama to consult Baba. The reply came from Baba saying, "Why accept the new? The old is quite good." So, he did not accept it. His practice was flourishing and he was not a loser by not accepting the Public Prosecutorship. He appealed to Baba in professional matters also and followed the directions of Baba in such matters. There was a case of grievous hurt in which three brothers were convicted. An opponent of theirs had a bone broken and the injured man had been attended to by a medical man who was not a qualified or certified doctor, being kept in his private nursing home for over 20 days. When Dhumal went up with his appeal memo and bail application, the Sessions Judge, a senior European Officer remarked, "The case looks strong. I am not going to allow bail." At once Dhumal thought of Baba and turned to the Judge. He told the Judge, "The evidence of a bone having been broken is that of an unqualified person, a quack and the prosecution evidence is interested and unreliable. The appellants are all agriculturists and the only workers in their homes. If they are all in jail, their farms would perish." At once the Judge allowed bail. When the case came up for argument, the Public Prosecutor wanted S. B. Dhumal not to argue on merits but to simply ask for clemency, in which case he would not oppose. But S. B. Dhumal made up his mind to argue on merits, and finally wound up by asking for a reduction of the sentence. The Judge said, "For reduction of sentence, so much time need not have been taken." When Public Prosecutor argued, the Judge asked how the grievous hurt could be made, as the opinion about the breakage of the bone was that of a quack and not that of a qualified doctor. The Public Prosecutor replied, "The injured man had been in the hospital for about 20 days". The Judge sharply answered, "You can argue that before a Third Class Magistrate and not before me." The Public Prosecutor collapsed with that remark and did not argue any further. The appellants were acquitted.

Another professional matter was still more interesting. Baba's servant Reghu and five others were convicted and imprisoned on a charge of outraging the modesty of a *Marwadi* woman and Raghu was crying out in jail at Ahmednagar. Baba appeared to him and said. 'I will see you freed'. Next day Taty Patil brought the appeal papers to Baba after shown having them to some senior lawyers, who found that the conviction was based upon six eye witnesses. They considered it

hopeless. Tatya took the papers to Bhav, Bhav means S. B. Dhumal at Nasik. When Tatya brought papers, Dhumal looked them up and told him, "there are so many seniors above me. Why don't you take to Ahmednagar". But Tatya replied, 'Baba said that you should present the appeal', and that settled the course. At once Dhumal drew up an appeal memo and went to the District Magistrate of Ahmednagar at his bungalow. The District Magistrate asked him, 'What is it about?' Then Dhumal mentioned that it was a conviction for outraging a Marwadi woman's modesty on the testimony of six eye witnesses. The Magistrate remarked, 'It seems a very strong case'. At once Baba's modus operandi was seen. Dhumal said, 'Why six eye witnesses, Your Honour? You can get sixty eye witnesses in a fraction ridden village like Shirdi'. the Magistrate said, 'Do you think so?' Dhumal replied, 'Think! Why, I am more than sure of it.' When the words were being uttered through the mouth of Dhumal, the mind of Magistrate was being operated upon, and so he said, 'If so, I acquit all your appellants'. The Magistrate had not called for the papers from the lower court, nor read the judgement nor appeal memo, but simply said, 'Hand over the appeal memo to me and tell me the facts you are relying upon'. Dhumal practically dictated the appellate court judgement. The magistrate, a senior European officer simply wrote it out, and at once acquitted the appellants. The Magistrate then asked Dhumal, 'Is Sai Baba of yours a Hindu or Muslim?', showing that all the while it was Sai Baba who was operating on his mind. Dhumal answered, 'Neither the one nor the other. He is above both'. What does he teach was the next question of the Magistrate. Dhumal was up to the occasion. He said, 'You must go to him yourself to know that'. 'Can I go?' asked the Magistrate. Dhumal replied, 'Yes, you can certainly go'. The Magistrate had an idea of going to Shirdi some time later, but subsequently dropped the matter. So it was only for the nonce he felt interested in Shirdi. Meanwhile, Dhumal without any surety was taken Raghu and other five with him to Shirdi. That was the time when poor Dixit's daughter died there and people were going to attend the cremation. Baba called some of them and said, 'Don't go, I will show you some *chamatkar*'. Shortly thereafter the appellants arrived. Then the people learnt how the senior District Magistrate acquitted the appellants straightway without hearing the other side or without sending for the papers and realised that this was the *chamatkar*. This is *Manasthambam*. Baba had gripped the mind of District Magistrate and made him deal out summary justice for the weird and great saint's servants.

In respect of Dhumal's further progress in life, Baba looked after him after his *Mahasamadhi* quite as well as he did before. Dhumal was the

first nominated President of the Nasik District Board from 1917-25. As President he had to sign papers, thousands in number, without using facsimile. This took many hours of the day and that reduced his practice as well as the income tax he had to pay. But he got the Sanad of Rao Bahadur in recognition of his service. This was in 1927. But one of the peculiar happenings during the time when he was the District Board President is worthy of notice. Each night, a peon would stand with papers, and after his signing each one, the peon would blot each paper, so that the next one might be ready for signature. One day when these papers were with him, some visitor, for whom he had very high regard, came and talked on till midnight. So, the signatures had to be postponed. Early morning he had to run away for a case and returned only at night. Then, he called for the papers of the previous day and that day. The Head Clerk came and asked him, 'Why did you send for the papers of the previous day?'. Dhumal said that he had not signed them. Then the head Clerk showed, to the astonishment of Dhumal, that all the previous day's papers bore his signatures. Dhumal wondered at the miracle done by Baba.

We shall give another instance, Sri Gopal Rao Buty of Nagpur, a mill owner, was anxious to help Dhumal and wanted to send him to England. He said that he would provide for the expenses of Dhumal's journey and the support of Dhumal's family during his absence in England. All these had been settled between them, and when Shama went to ask Baba whether Bhav, that is Dhumal, was to be sent to Bilayat, Baba asked, "What for?" Shama said, "To study for the Bar." Baba said, "No." His Hayat and *Vilayat* are not in *Bilayat* but in this country". Therefore, Dhumal did not go to England, but his practice was not the worst for it.

It was in 1912 that he underwent an operation under chloroform. It was risky but before the chloroform began to operate he saw Baba seated on a chair near his head and he took courage. Baba is there to look after me, he thought. The operation was a perfect success.

In some private matters such as when he attended to the health of his brother's wife at Poona, Baba decided for him in a most mysterious way. he started from Nasik to go to Poona, where the sick lady was, with Rs. 80 in his pocket to cover expenses of the journey and contingent expenditure. But as Shirdi being en route, he stopped there. Baba took from him, as dakshina, all the eighty Rupees and kept him for three days with him. Then, when he asked for leave, Baba said, "We will see." After the third day, a telegram came from Poona saying that the lady had died. It is only after this that Baba gave him

leave to go. It was clear that Baba could foresee the end of the lady and the uselessness of Dhumal's visit. Anyhow, that was the year in which Baba passed away and Dhumal had the precious opportunity of spending three days with him.

After Baba passed away, Dhumal accepted the Revenue Membership of the Dewar State, and was also the Karbari of Sarguna State from 1932-33. When he was in the Sarguna State, the Chief of the State visited him and walked into his room, where he was dining at a table. Dhumal then apologised for his inability to leave the table and accord proper reception, but the Chief had walked into the next room from where Dhumal sat, Saw Baba's portrait hanging on the wall, came back to the room, and announced at once, "Your pay is increased by Rs. 50." Dhumal had never asked for it. This grant within a fortnight of his appointment, and without any effort on his part, must have been only by Baba's influence.

Mantiche Chitta Lekurache Hita

that is, the child's welfare is the mother's care.

Dhumal was casting chits after Baba's Mahasamadhi to ascertain Baba's orders. When Baba was in the flesh, he had got a coloured painted picture of Baba, and as he was passing by *Dwarakamayee* carrying the picture, Baba asked him, "What is it?" Dhumal said, "You are here." Baba asked for it, took it, kept it for a while, gazed at it in the front and at the back, and returned it to him saying "Keep it". This was the very thing, which he was anxious to get – a portrait of Baba for worship, blessed by having been in his hands. That is the very picture in which Baba is standing in a pensive or meditative mood, indicative of his words, "Bhav, I had no sleep all night due to thinking of you." Baba gave him many coins, each time taking dakshina of Rs. 2/- and returning it, saying,

Japoon Teva Konala Devunnako Kars Karun Nako

that is, Preserve these carefully. Do not give it to anyone nor spend it. He gave him Rs. 2, then Rs. 20 on one occasion, Rs. 50 on another occasion, and Rs. 30 on some other occasion. By these gifts, he had a total sum of Rs. 69. These Dhumal treated as charmed coins that carry luck with them or, as they call them, Mascots. Baba asked Buty for dakshina of Rs. 20. Buty gave it. Then Baba asked him again for Rs. 20 dakshina, and latter Rs. 20 he gave to Dhumal. On one occasion he got Rs. 30 from Buty and took the money. The he shook the coins in

both his hands and divided them roughly into each hand one part in each hand, and gave one part to Dhumal. Each had exactly Rs. 15. Baba not only gave but also took.

Datati Prathigrinnathi,

that is, giving and receiving are signs of life. Baba acts sometimes,

*Yesya Anugraham Ichyami
Tasye Sarvam Harami Aham*

Baba sometimes took away by asking for dakshina the entire contents of Dhumal's pockets, leaving him penniless. But Dhumal neither regretted it nor had fear, for it was Baba who gave him and Baba who took and He never failed to provide. His reasons for taking dakshina are clear. When Dhumal had gone to Ahmednagar to Reghu's appeal, the parties paid him Rs. 300. When Dhumal came before Baba, Baba asked him for dakshina over and over again till his Rs. 300 was completely paid out because, the whole thing was due to Baba's *chamatkar*, and so, he must not receive or, at any rate, retain any fee given for that.

Kaka Saheb H. S. Dixit has communicated some of his experiences to Dhumal, and Dhumal mentions how Baba helped Dixit even after His Mahasamadhi. The incident is about Rs. 30,000 given to Dixit. This showed Dixit's absolute reliance on Baba as his supporter. Rs. 30,000 is a very big sum, and Dixit's resources had all been whittled down to zero and he could not easily get such a large sum from any one. It was only Baba's supreme power of control over minds that could produce the sum of Rs. 30,000, which was brought to his office table just in time to pay off his creditors.

Another incident mentioned by Dixit is the provision for Dixit's younger brother Sadasiva for the position of bank officer for the Cutch State on Rs. 1,000 a month, when there was absolutely no hope of Sadasiva earning a pie. But Dixit had cast chits before Baba, about whether to keep Sadasiva at Bombay or not and Baba's answer on the chit was, 'Keep him at Bombay'. But at Bombay, Sadasiva could not practice. Instead of practice, he got this post at the bank.

Throughout his life, Dhumal benefited greatly in temporal affairs and he held a high position at Nasik. Consequently he was on the Sai Sansthan Committee and acted as its trustee up to his death. so, Dhumal's life is an excellent instance of Baba's giving full temporal and

LIFE OF SAI BABA

spiritual support to all those that place implicit reliance on him. Baba's spiritual help in his case was to provide sadgati for his wife, and fairly good end for himself because Baba had kept him pure and full of Nishta or faith in the Guru.