

G. G. NARKE

Amongst the highly placed and notable devotees who had direct contact with Sai Baba and performed worthy service for the Sai Sansthan, prominent mention has to be made of G. G. Narke, M.A. (Cal)., M.Sc., (Manch) Professor of Geology and Chemistry in the College of Engineering, Poona. He was perhaps the one man with the largest number of degrees who served as trustee of the Sansthan, and perhaps the most respected for his learning. he gave his statement to Sri. B. V. N. Swami on four days and the chief interest in his statement in his study of Baba and his research. The *Vidya Vasana*, characteristic of the man, gleams through his statement, and it is responsible for the position he occupied amongst the devotees and servants of Baba. Persons far inferior to him in education have been the highest in Sai bhakti and in their intense love to Baba, which stamped them as the *Ankita* or acknowledged children of Baba. Narke also had remarkable benefits from his contact with Baba, and had numerous opportunities to stay at Shirdi and get into close contact with Baba. But somehow the intellectual screen did not allow him to get into sufficiently close contact with Baba like the Ankitas. The reason for his going to Baba was first his wife, father-in-law and mother wanted him to go there. His father-in-law was Mr. Buty of Nagpur. G. G. Narke's learning included some religious studies also. he used to read Jnaneswari, and other books dealing with the greatness of Satpurusha, and he had heard that Sai Baba was such a *Satpurusha*, a *Samartha* Satpurusha will be more correct. He went out to England in 1909 as a State scholar of the Government of India and returned in August 1912.

When his wife, mother and father-in-law asked him to go to Shirdi to see Sai Baba, he first wanted to assure himself if Baba wanted him

and so wrote back that he would go if Baba wanted him. So, in April 1913, he went up to see Sai Baba. His mother was greatly liked by Baba and as the son of his mother, he was naturally welcome. So, Shama alias Madhava Rao Deshpande introduced him to Baba. Baba then said to Shama, 'You introduce him to me! I have known him for thirty *pidis*. That was the initial surprise for Narke. His first impression of Baba was derived by looking at Baba's eyes. Baba's eyes were piercing. His glance pierced Narke through and through. Long after Baba passed away, in 1930 when Narke gave his statement, he said, 'I still have the indelible impression of Baba sitting in the chavadi with piercing eyes'.

Narke joined the current of devotees and did his portion of service to Baba and attended artis etceteras. But at one of the earliest *artis*, Baba was in a towering passion. He was fuming, cursing and threatening' whom and what for, nobody could say. And the idea occurred to Narke, 'Is Baba mad?'. that was during the *arti*, and after the *arti* was over, he went home and returned to Baba in the afternoon to massage Baba's feet and legs. Baba stroking his head said, 'Arre Narke, I am not mad'. The passing thought which he had in the morning when he was one in the crowd, was still known to Baba. So, he concluded that nothing was concealed from Baba. 'He is my *Antaryami*, inner Soul of my soul' he said. He then attempted to study Baba, and accumulated experience after experience demonstrating Baba's *Anataryamitva*. When Baba spoke, he spoke as one seated in Narke's heart knowing all his thoughts and his wishes. Narke said 'This is God within'. So, Baba must be God, he thought, but still as a scientific minded professor, he wanted to test him further. Whenever he tested him the conviction was brought home again to him that Baba was All-knowing and All-seeing, and All-powerful, that is, able to mould all things to his will. the professor gave out of the hundreds of instances that he knew, only a few in his statements, which proved beyond doubt that the past, present and future were open before Baba though the future appears unfixed and liable to be changed by human will. So, first let us see proof about Narke himself.

Baba, speaking in 1913, said that Buty the professor's father-in-law, would built a Dagdiwada, a stone edifice at Shirdi, and that the professor would be in charge of it. It was only in 1915-16, that is, two or three years later, that Buty began to build it. It was after 1920 that there was a Sansthan with trustees and Narke became one of the trustees in charge of the tomb in that very Dagdiwada owned by his father-in-law. Another instance, still more interesting to him, occurred this way. His mother, was very anxious about his employment, and

noted with concern that since he did not have any employment, he was tossing from town to town for petty sums on mining and prospecting jobs which were advertised in the press in various places – even in Burma and Balaghat. He once stayed at Shirdi for 13 months without any employment. He got disgusted and thought that he ought to turn himself into a fakir. In 1914, when Baba was distributing kapnis to fakirs, he was hoping that Baba would give him a kapni. but Baba did not give him one. A little later, Baba beckoned him and placing his hand with kindness on his head, stroked it and said, 'Do not blame me for not giving you a kapni. That fakir (God) has not permitted me to give you one.' His mother and others were asking Baba what was to become of this Narke, seeing how unsettled his course of life was and how far he had to travel to earn small sums. His mother prayed to Baba to give him good employment nearer home or even near Shirdi. Baba answered, 'I will settle him at Poona'. Whenever there was any job advertised in the press, Narke would go to Baba and ask him, 'Shall I go to this place – Calcutta or Burma – for the job?' Baba would say, 'Go to Calcutta and Poona, Go to Burma and Poona', adding Poona after each. But there was no scope for his employment at Poona for some years. In 1917, an announcement was made that the Engineering College at Poona wanted a Geology Professor. Narke went up to Baba and asked him whether he should apply. Baba said, 'Yes'. So, Narke went to Poona to the people concerned. It was a very difficult and uphill task, because there were so many applicants and they were supported by very influential people. But for Narke there was no influential backing. Baba enquired of some people at Shirdi at that time, 'Where has Narke gone?' and they said that he had gone to Poona to try for the job. Allah will bless, was the remark of Baba and that was the backing Narke got. Baba also asked whether Narke had any children, and the person there said, 'None. The children born died after a very short life'. Baba again said, 'Allah will bless'. Both these blessings came true. In 1918, he secured the appointment of Professor of Geology and Mining in Poona and the children born to him subsequently are all alive. There are four of those children even now (1956). How Baba could foresee the future event is the moot problem for metaphysicians and philosophers and would puzzle every professor. The future must be fixed if it is to be foreseen. In that case there is no free will for any of the people who produce the results predicted. So, on the horns of this dilemma, learned people were impaled, and Narke, being no exception to the rule, was however, lucky enough to get actual experience of Baba's statements regarding the future turning out to be true. He had to conclude that Baba's nature was obviously divine and omnipotent, able to control the future in such a way as still to make people who are exercising their

'free wills' to work up to the end that is fixed, Baba's nature was very puzzling and when Narke was studying Baba's nature, Baba complimented him, calling him a Hushiar or a clever man. Baba never stifled legitimate enquiry. Everything he said or did was full of significance and the professor declared, that he could mostly understand them.

We will now give the result of this professor's study of Baba, and then show the other side of the shield. The professor noted that Baba was living and operating in other worlds also, besides this world, and that he was working in an invisible body too. His words were highly cryptic, symbolical, allegorical, and not plain. But one carefully noting them could make out what Baba meant. Baba would often refer to '*Paica*', 'Oh, Brahmins earn much *paica* by their ways' he would say. He did not mean *dakshinas*. He meant '*Punya, Apurva* or merit acquired by careful observance of duties of a Brahmin. Baba was also often misunderstood, when he talked in his mysterious ways. For instance in 1914 or thereabouts, a Harda gentleman, rich and old came with a lady to Shirdi. He was suffering from tuberculosis. For one month he improved at Shirdi. But later on he grew worse and worse, and the end seemed to be nearing. One day, ladies of his house told Narke that he was in a critical condition, and that he should go and ask Baba for udhi. When he went, Baba said, 'The man would be better by quitting the earth, what can the udhi do? Any how, take the udhi and give it as it is wanted'. So, Narke gave the udhi, but did not report the conversation. The Harda gentleman's condition grew worse, and Shama, arriving later, informed Baba that death was imminent. Just about the time of death, Baba remarked, 'How can he die? In the morning he will come back to life' This was taken by the relatives of the sick man to mean that he would not die or that he would revive. So, they placed lamps all round the corpse and waited till noon the next day. But life was not restored. His funeral ceremonies followed. The Harda gentleman's relations thought Baba had given them false hopes, and for three years they did not return to Shirdi. One day, one of those relations saw Baba in a dream with the deceased man's head over his own. Baba disclosed the lungs in a rotten state, and said, 'From the torture of all this, I saved him'. Thereafter the relations renewed their visits to Shirdi. Then the meaning of Baba's words became apparent. How can he die, referred not to this life but the survival of human personality, which takes up new forms of life.

Baba used to sleep either at *Masjid* or at *chavadi*, and while sitting in front of the duni, he would often say to what distant places he went overnight and what he had done. People sleeping by his side and

seeing his body by their side all night would wonder how he could have travelled when his body was there. But Baba did travel with the invisible body to distant places and there rendered actual service.

Baba used to often describe scenes in the other worlds. For instance, when a Shirdi *marwadi's* boy died, people returning from his funeral heard Baba say, 'He must be nearing the river now, just crossing it.' The professor G G Narke says this could have reference only to *Vaitarani* which dead souls have to cross.

Then Baba's reference to past lives often puzzled people. But those who had faith appreciated these recitals. Narke himself had full faith in Baba told him the facts of four of his previous lives. He said this in the presence of others. But others could not understand that these referred to Narke. Baba had the peculiar art of giving information to particular individuals in the midst of a group in a way that those concerned alone could understand and not others. Thus at one sitting, by a few acts and words, he benefited numerous people.

As Sai Baba could traverse other realm than this earth and could control what took place everywhere and, because he could see the past and the future alike quite clearly, his nature could be clearly inferred. He was not a body-bound soul. Baba himself brought this out by asking the question. 'Where are you? Where am I? Where is this world?' Pointing to his own body, he once said, 'This is my house. I am not here. My Mourshad Guru has taken me away. That is, his Dehatmabuddhi was completely swept off by that Guru. The professor, very clever in his logic, concluded 'Sai Baba is alive. He is where he was then. Even then he was where he is now.' These highly learned statements carry much truth with them.

Baba's references revealed to Narke that the function performed by Baba was very peculiar. Baba stated that he controlled the destinies of departed souls. So, that was an important function of his. As Sai Baba never spoke untruth, not merely babbled meaningless words, the professor concluded that He was a Divinely gifted person whose function was to regulate the fate of departed souls, that is, those who had been in contact with him.

As for Baba's declaration about his *Guru*, Professor Narke heard Baba say, *Maja Guru Brahman ahe*, that is, My *Guru* is a Brahmin. Having said so much about his *Guru*, professor Narke carefully noted that Baba did not say that he had any *sishya* to continue his line. On the other hand, Sai Baba said, 'I would tremble to come into the presence

of my *Guru*.' There was no one prepared to serve Sai Baba in that way at Shirdi. Once Sai Baba asked, it seems, 'Who dares to call himself my disciple? Who can serve me adequately and satisfactorily?' But apart from a disciple to continue the line, Baba helped in various ways and in various degrees. He encouraged them, protected them, and gave them instructions occasionally. Narke was studying Baba's methods of teaching and improving devotees. Baba gave our moral tales and a few occasional directions. But these were exceptional. But the traditional method of Baba was not oral. His traditional method was first the negative portion, that is, the *Guru* did not give to his chosen disciple any *Guru mantra*. Usually a *Guru* whispers a *mantra* into the ear of the *sishta*, and he seems to be almost biting the ear when he is whispering. So, Baba said, '*Me Kanala Dasnara Guru Navhe*.' That is, 'I am not the *Guru* that bites the ear. He did not regard *japa* and meditation as sufficient for the *sishta*. These produce in the *sadhaka Abhimana* or *Ahamkara*. Unless and until *Ahamkara* is completely wiped out the *Guru* is unable to pour all his influence into the *sishta*. In Baba's school, the *Guru* does not teach. He radiates or pours influence. That influence is poured in and absorbed in full by the soul which has completely surrendered itself and blotted out the self, but is obstructed by the exercise of intelligence by reliance on self-exertion and by every species of self-consciousness and self-assertion. Baba, therefore, would tell some devotees, 'Be by me and keep quiet and I will do the rest,' that is, 'secretly or invisibly.' Of course faith in him – absolute faith – is a pre-requisite. One who was merely seeing him and staying by him for a while got faith. Baba gave experiences to each devotee, of his vast powers of looking into his heart, into the distance regions of space and time, past or future and these infused faith. One need not swallow a thing on trust. The solid benefit, temporal or spiritual reaped by the devotee and his feeling that he is under the eye and power of Baba always, wherever he may be and whatever he may do, gave him an ineradicable basis for his further temporal and spiritual guidance.

Baba's is the power that controls this world's goods and our fate here and now, as well as our experience and fate in the future, in this world and many unseen worlds. The professor concludes that the duty of a devotee under Baba is only to keep himself fit for the *Guru's* grace. That is, he should be chaste, pure, simple and virtuous and he should look trustfully and sincerely to the beloved master to operate on him secretly, and to raise him to various experiences, higher and higher in range, till he is taken at last to the distance goal. 'But one step is enough for me', is the proper attitude now, He need not take the trouble to decide complicated metaphysical and philosophical problems

about the ultimate destiny. He is ill-prepared to solve them now. The *Guru* will lift him and endow him with higher powers, vaster knowledge and increasing realisation of truth. And the end is safe in the *Guru's* hands.

These above conclusions, as the professor says, are not from any single lecture or address by Baba, but are gathered from the various hints, his dealings with many people and his occasional words.

The professor was a keen observer of what Sai Baba said and did, and, therefore, even his inferences of Baba's methods and intentions are of some use. Talking about the orthodox method of *Sadhana Chatushtaya* that is *viveka*, *vairagya*, *samadhishatka* and *mumkshutva*, Narke says, taking the first two, there is something to note as to what *viveka* and *vairagya* are. Mere talk of *viveka* and *vairagya* without the power of knowing what should be experienced or enjoyed and what should be renounced, is childish and leads to self-delusion and deluding others. It is bookish wisdom and not real, and cannot stand the strain of actual life. Mere talking of *viveka* and *vairagya* without being filled with them will only prove a man a hypocrite. Here, he says, is the advantage of knowing Baba. When Baba said, 'I am in the dog, pig and cat', he actually felt himself inside the dog, pig and cat and could say what they felt and what treatment they got. But others say the same, because such statements are found in the Gita and they believe them to be true. But, as there is no feeling or realisation behind their words, such statements would tend to hypocrisy. as for Baba's nature, this intellectually advanced professor began to consider both the material and the spiritual side of Baba, but stressed mostly the material. He was insisting on the material, because other devotees were insisting on the spiritual and forgot the material. So, he told them, 'Though Baba is God from the devotees' point of view, yet he is a man seen in the flesh and with limitations to which an individual embodied soul is subject'. The two co-exist and are both true, each in its way. But his friends, the devotees at Shirdi, did not agree with him or, at any rate, relish his view. They were relying on the puranas and Ithihasas. They were talking of 56 crores of islanders in *Dwaraka* at Sri Krishna's time. The professor disputed the statistical accuracy of the population and said, 'We are thirty three crores in the whole of India now and India is so over populated that we have to tread on each other's heels.' and would not accept that estimate of 56 crores. As he was disputing so many propositions in the puranas, they asked him if he would abide by Baba's decision on the matter, and he said, 'Yes'. Then they all went to Baba. Madhavrao

LIFE OF SAI BABA

Deshpande and other devotees asked Baba, 'Are the *puranas* true?' Baba said, 'Yes'.

Madhavrao : 'What about Rama and Krishna?'

Sai Baba : 'They were great souls, because they were Avatars.'

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

Sai Baba : 'What he says is true.' (Here the Professor was very glad that Baba confirmed his views of the material side of Baba). 'But I am your father, and you should not speak like that, You have to get your benefit and everything from me.'

The professor says, 'Baba thus admitted his limitations'. He was God no doubt in the experience of the devotee; but because the devotee felt that, Sai Baba did not assert himself to be, in fact, nothing but God. He did not draw logical corollaries from it, nor use that position to help himself to the wealth etcetra, of the devotees'. On the basis of the devotees view, Sai Baba did not declare Antinomianism, that is setting himself up as above law. On the other hand Sai Baba disobeyed either the moral law or the law as it prevails in the country. He was never indecent in dress or behaviour and was very reserved with women. Here obviously, the professor is contrasting the behaviour of Sai Baba with the behaviour of Upasani Baba who, at Sakori, 3 miles further off, declared himself to be above all law, and occasionally disobeyed them, and who was an *Avadhuta*, that is, without any covering, and was freely moving with large number of women folk.

But in the above, the professor failed to note that Baba was pointing out a very important truth. Things have a material and spiritual side. There are images, *Gurus*, *Avatars*, etcetra and they have a spiritual side as well as a material one. If any person is earnest in attempting to benefit by contact with these, he would commit a terrible mistake if he would advert to the material side only, the side of limitations. If he wanted real benefit, he would have to forget completely the material side or portion, and the limitation that go with the material, and think only of the divine in the image, in the *Guru* and in the *Avatar*, and that is what Baba meant by saying, 'You have to get your benefit and everything from me, as I am your father'. Baba is the father of all devotees, only if viewed as God. If viewed as man, he had no children, and so could not be the father of all his devotees. But if viewed as

God, he is necessarily the father of all, possessed of parental kindness. When the fatherhood is recognised by the devotees, and they wish to get the benefits of being his children, the Guru-God Baba gives them that benefit, returns their love, and his eye of kindly supervision is over all those that love him. That love is destroyed by adverting to the material side. This all truth, the intellectually developed professor was apt to ignore.

About two generations back, there was a Professor of Geology, an Englishman, in the Presidency College, Chennai. He went out on his study of geology and anthropology in the mofussil with his usual small mallet in hand and came to a hamlet where there were a number of pottery works in the shape of horses in front of a temple. To study their composition, the professor knocked off the nose of one of the horses. The villagers were aghast, but soon gathered in a crowd and hunted the professor out who run for his life. Similarly, if one should go to the sacred shrine of Tirupati and look at Srinivasa's image, which fills so many devotees with the holiest of feelings, thankfulness for blessings already received and with hope for the grant of further relief prayed for; and if one should take up one's mallet and chip off a portion of sacred image, he might discover the actual composition of the material-whether it is of the Tertiary age, or whether it is a drop rock. But from the point of common-sense anyone would declare that the geological test and appraisal of the sacred image is absurd and may prove ruinous to any man who attempts it. The sastras repeatedly declare that in the case of images, saints, etcetra, the physical aspect should not be considered. In them, matter and spirit are intertwined and closely combined, as in the living body, and when a holy person is approached, it is a sad lack of wisdom for one to be thinking of the material body and its short-comings. Baba himself expressed this view on a famous occasion. In 1910 or 1911, his fame was widespread in the Bombay State. The wife of the Revenue Commissioner, Mr. Curtis, wanted to go to Baba with a view to get his blessing for an issue as she was barren, and the Revenue Commissioner accompanied her. The Collector, the Deputy Collector and a host of people were coming to Shirdi, and the chief of them, Sir George Seymour Curtis, was without faith and was only desirous of 'doing' Baba, that is, seeing him so as to be able to say that he had been to Shirdi and had the opportunity of seeing the much talked of fakir. Knowing his mentality, long before the crowd could be seen, Baba was saying at the *Dwarakamayee*, 'Rascal! Coming to see me! What have I got? I am a naked fakir with human organs'. People could not make out whom Baba was referring to. But soon the full official procession headed by Mrs. and Mr. Curtis, and followed by the Collector, the Assistant Commissioner, and others

passed in front of the *Dwarakamayee*. Then they went on to the *chavadi* and from there wished to send word to Baba. That was however impossible as no one would convey orders to Baba. Then Baba himself passed in front of the *chavadi*, and Mrs. Curtis wished to have a talk. Baba said, 'Wait for half an hour'. But Baba returned within ten minutes, and she again said she wished to have a talk. Baba said, 'Wait for one hour'. The officers were impatient. Mr. Curtis had done Baba and done Shirdi and they went off. Of course Mrs. Curtis's object, namely, to get a child by Baba's blessings, was not achieved.

Professor Narke gives an excellent analysis of the four margas, namely, *Yoga*, *Karma*, *Jnana* and *Bhakti*, and points out how *yoga* and *karma* margas were not those prescribed by Baba, nor even the *Jnana marga*, that is, if it is taken as consisting in an intellectual effort to understand the Upanishads and Brahma Sutras or a study of the Self. That was not Baba's method or aim. Baba renounced all attachments after being a master of everything that this world and other worlds have to offer, by reason of his wonderful siddhis and power. Therefore, his *vairagya* was real *vairagya* and Baba's continued and perpetual activity to serve the public was *Nishkamya karma*. But, as for the *margas*, the professor points out that *bhakti marga* was the main plank of Baba as of other saints. Now what are its features, and what is its goal? First, *Guru bhakti*, and next serving and loving the Guru and God are its chief features. Baba stressed the importance of devotion to one's Guru and treating him as God in, through, and as, the Guru, and identifying the Guru with god, that forms Baba's *bhakti marga*. The professor's analysis is fairly right, though he was not very successful in following Baba as God for his own purpose. Intellectualism is admirable in certain respects, but, for the purpose of actual life, the habit of viewing everything from the intellectual standpoint weakens one's power to adopt Baba's method of identifying the Guru with god and plunging boldly with full faith in every world of his into the course that Baba may point out. What Dixit and others with greater faith could do was not possible for a highly trained intellectual. The professor notes that Baba, whom everybody considered to be a Mohammedan had such great reverence for Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, as the professor himself was not able to feel or exhibit. But the professor was an orthodox Hindu in many respects of the intellectual type. He was studying *Yoga Vasishta*, a highly philosophical work, which many find very difficult, if not possible, to understand. About his study of *Yoga Vasishta*, Baba had sometime to say, There are portions even in *Yoga Vasishta* which would enable one to get into intimate contact with God and be absorbed in him. When the professor was reading a passage apparently of the above sort, Baba told him to

give him Rs. 15 *dakshina*. The professor pleaded his impecuniosity saying, 'Baba, you know I have no money. Why do you ask me for Rs. 15 *dakshina*?' Baba said, 'Yes, I know it. But you are reading an excellent book now. Get me Rs. 15 *dakshina* from that'. The professor knew that he should study that special portion of *Yoga Vasishta* which refers to 15 elements of which one's personality is made up, and present them to Baba in his own heart, as his *Antaryami*. that is, he should get *laya* in Baba. But this was only an intellectual perception. The professor was sufficiently orthodox to carry on, (or to get carried on) the usual worship of sacred images of *Avatars* at his own house. But this does not lead one very far in achieving the goal of *laya*.

Baba gave this professor sufficient opportunities to get a proper appreciation of himself. In 1916, when plague was rife at Shirdi, the usual prasada or naivedya of *halwa* had not been brought to the *Dwarakamayee*. The Baba asked Narke to go and get the sweetmeat from the *Halwayi's* shop. So, Narke went and told the wife of the sweetmeat merchant of Baba's order. She then pointed to the corpse of her husband, who had died of plague, and that Narke might take the sweetmeat from the almirah. He took it, but he was trembling all the time, for fear he might catch the infection and others eating it might catch the infection if that was given as prasad. But as he approached Baba, Baba said, 'You think you will live if you are away from Shirdi. That is not so. Whosoever is destined to be struck, will be struck. Whosoever is to die will die. Whosoever is to be caressed will be caressed'. The halwa was given as Baba's prasad, and no one caught plague.

So, Narke realised the wonderful knowledge Baba had over sources of danger, and the way he controlled danger from plague, and guided people aright, a knowledge which ordinary human beings did not possess. Baba was obviously superhuman, that is, Divine. Baba knew where cholera was at Shirdi and how it could be controlled. He had lepers about him who massaged his legs. He could evidently keep off and control leprosy infection. Udhi was usually put into the mouth of sick people, and the leper by the side of Baba sometimes took the udhi from the fire and distributed it, and all accepted it from the hands of the leper. Yet no harm resulted. So, Narke had ample opportunities to see and learn about Baba's divine knowledge and divine control. But he never attained even a fraction of that intense faith and self-forgetfulness and that intense love which characterised the Ankita children of Baba like H.S. Dixit, Purandhare, and others.

LIFE OF SAI BABA