

M. W. Pradhan was President of the Sansthan for some time and his contact with Sai Baba was the result of N. G. Chandorkar's influence. In May 1910, Pradhan's brothers were chatting with Chandorkar, and his brother Rama Rao asked, 'Akkalkote Maharaj was a great saint, and he is dead. Is there anyone nowadays of this type?' Then Chandorkar revealed to him that there was, and that was Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi. Till then Shirdi had never been heard of by others, and they learnt that it was the Kopergaon taluk of Ahmednagar district on the Dhond-Manmad line, 11 miles from Kopergaon station. Chandorkar then gave such a vivid and glowing account of Baba's power, kindness, greatness and his personality that every one hearing it was anxious to start immediately to get *darshan* of Baba. So, a group of about 14 people went the very next day to Shirdi, but M.W. Pradhan was not in the party. The party returned and brought with them a copy of Baba's picture and Das Ganu's *Bhakta Lilamrita*, describing Baba's life and miracles. M W Pradhan took them to his wife and there read the book. Then all his doubts about Baba vanished and he became a firm believer that Baba was a true saint. His wife's faith was even greater. They were anxious to depart for Shirdi. A fortnight after the return of the first party that is in May 1910 Pradhan went to Shirdi. Chandorkar's two sons, namely Bapu and Babu, were his companions. He wanted to present Baba with gold sovereigns and carried them as well as some currency notes. When he arrived at Shirdi, Baba was standing on the road near the *Lendi* as though he was waiting for the party. At once Pradhan and others got down and he prostrated to Sai Maharaj. There he met Rao Bahadur Sathe and Mr. Noolkar, First Class Sub Judge, and then went to the mosque where he wished to garland Baba and gave him all the presents. There, he felt that Sai Baba was

really a great saint, and that his having come was really fulfilling his mission in life.

This rising faith was lucky, because Baba put his faith to the test at once. Baba asked for *dakshina*. Originally Pradhan had intended to give Rs. 20, but he gave Baba a gold sovereign instead. Baba took it, turned it this side and that side, and said 'What is this?' Mr. Noolkar who was there said, 'Baba, this is a guinea (a former British coin)'. Baba said, 'What is its worth?' Mr. Noolkar replied, 'Rs. 15'. Baba returned the coin to Pradhan saying, 'I do not want this. Keep it with you, but give me Rs. 15'. Pradhan was glad to have a coin touched by Baba and returned to him and gave Baba Rs. 15, then Baba, professing to count the rupees said, 'I find only Rs.10 here. Give me Rs. 5 more'. This was a test because having Rs. 15 in hand, he said that he had only Rs. 10 and was testing a lawyer, who would generally be combative and discuss questions of accounts. But Pradhan rose to the occasion and gave him Rs. 5 more. Then Pradhan remembered that he had intended to give Rs. 20, and Baba took that Rs. 20 under cover of wrong calculation. Baba did not ask for more. So, Baba's *vairagya* and indifference to money was clear, and Baba's testing of *bhaktas* also was clear.

Baba gave him other means also for strengthen his faith, that is, instances of his *antarjnana* and help by miraculous means. On the next occasion, when he visited Baba, he beckoned to him addressing him as Bhav and said merely, 'It will be all right in 2 or 4 days'. Then Baba gave him *udhi* and Pradhan returned from the Mosque. Pradhan remained for there for 8 days on this occasion. And during that time he arranged for a special dinner or *bhiksha* to Sai Baba, and asked Baba, 'what the dishes were to be and who the invitees were to be'. Baba said, '*Pooran poli Obbattu*' was to be part of the dinner. Babu, nephew of Dada Kelkar, was to be one of the invitees. 'I also will come' – '*Mehe Yeyin*'. So, at the meal the next day every one was served, and a place was set apart for Baba, and dishes were also kept there. A crow lifted a *pooran poli* off the plate, and carried it away. They said, Baba is the crow and had taken the favourite *pooran poli*.

That evening, Baba gave one remarkable hint of his *antatjnana* and kindness to Pradhan. Baba touched his limbs on one side and said, 'On this side of my body there is excruciating pain. It will be alright in two or four days'. But Baba seemed to be healthy, and what he meant by his words was not then clear. But it became clear after Pradhan reached Bombay.

During this stay, on a Thursday, Pradhan saw Baba preparing food in a *hundi* pot to feed large numbers, *samaradhana*. He drove away every one from the *Masjid* at that time, and was alone with his *hundi*. Pradhan, Bapu and Babu, went in. Baba received them well and evidently excluded all others to give these a private interview. Baba appeared to be singing something first, but Pradhan discovered that the words were

*Kayare Apla kai Manave,
Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram.*

that is, what we should say is,
Sri Ram, Jaya Ram, Jaya Jaya Ram.

At once Pradhan was overcome with emotion, and he placed his hand on Baba's foot. these words were the *Guru Mantra* that had been given to M.V. Pradhan by his family Guru, Hari Bua, and that mantra he had long neglected. Baba was kindly reviving his interest and regard for that *Guru Mantra*, for his spiritual benefit, without having any express consultation or question from Pradhan. This deep love of Baba greatly impressed Pradhan. When the contents of the *hundi* were boiling, Baba put his entire hand into them, not using a spoon or ladle, and his hand was not scalded or swollen. Then suddenly at noon, Baba took Pradhan and the two boys to the *Lendi*. That was not his usual hour for visiting the *Lendi*, but there, after taking them, Baba was digging into the earth small hollows and giving some corn seeds into Pradhan's hands and made him sow that corn in the hollows. The seeds were then covered up with earth, Baba made Pradhan water the patches. Then the whole party returned to the Mosque. The significance of this event was that 7 or 8 years later *Lendi* garden was purchased for Baba's *Sansthan* by M.V. Pradhan for a sum of about Rs. 1500. Baba recognised that Pradhan would be useful to the *Sansthan* by his purchase of the *Lendi* garden, which has numerous holy associations with Baba, and forms an essential part of the sacred places revered by his devotees. At parting on that occasion, Babu Chandorkar placed a plate under Baba's feet, and pouring water over his feet, collected the *pada tirtham* to be carried home. that was unusual. Only *udhi* was taken till then, and *pada tirtham* was used only at the arati, at Shirdi, and not taken home.

But on this occasion, as Babu Chandorkar took *pada tirtham* home, Pradhan also took some home. On his way back, he was lucky enough to get into the first train, namely, the Punjab mail, though he did not have the ticket for it. That was lucky, for he reached home four or five

hour earlier, and on arrival learnt that his mother had an attack of paralysis, *Hemiplegia*. She was having excruciating pain on one side as Baba said. So, Baba was referring her pain and not his own pain, and Pradhan was lucky in going home by the earlier train with *pada tirtham* and Baba's *udhi*. The relations at home were considering whether they should inform Pradhan of his mother's illness, But Baba himself knew it and sent him back in time. the doctor, noting the high temperature of the patient and her constipation and restlessness, considered her condition critical, but if, however, the bowels moved in the course of the night, the doctor thought he situation would be more hopeful. It was 4.30 a.m. when Pradhan reached home. At once he gave Baba's *udhi* and *tirtham* to the mother. She became somnolent. A little later, her bowels moved, and her temperature fell. The doctor came and noted the improvement. Baba had arranged everything for the benefit of Pradhan's mother. 'In two or four days it will be all right', Baba said. Actually in two days it was all right with Pradhan's mother. Baba's *antarjnama* and his blessing to the mother of Pradhan had this double advantage of first benefiting the devotees in the family and next of developing faith. So, every member of Pradhan's family went to Baba and got his blessing.

One night Das Ganu was performing his *kirtan* at Pradhan's mother's place. after that, Das Ganu went over to Santa Cruz, that is Pradhan's own place, and there sang *kirtans* from 2 a.m. to 5 a.m. Listening to the kirtans, his wife got a burning desire to go to Shirdi at once. Baba came to her in a dream and this increased her desire. The question was if she went what was to be done with her sister-in-law, who was in an advanced state of pregnancy. Anyhow, she thought they would take risk, and so both the ladies started. Mr. Chandorkar received the ladies and Mr. Pradhan at Kopergaon station. Mr. Chandorkar was then getting an intermittent fever. At the time when he would be at Kopergaon for his return journey, the alternate day fever would come to him. so before leaving Shirdi he asked Baba's permission. Baba gave it, and the result was that when he came to Kopergaon he escaped the fever. He never again had that fever.

On the occasion of this visit, Baba pointing to Mrs. Pradhan said, 'This is going to be the mother of my Babu'. But Chandorkar thought that her sister-in-law being pregnant, the reference must be to her, and asked Baba, 'Is this the lady you mean?' pointing for the sister-in-law. Baba said, 'No. It is this' (pointing again to Mrs. Pradhan). It turned out that her sister-in-law had only a tumour and not a pregnancy. in 12 months from the time of Baba statement, Mrs. Pradhan delivered. Baba said it was Babu. When the child named Baba, because Baba said

it was Babu, was taken to Shirdi, Baba took up the child and asked it, 'Babu where had you been. Where you vexed with me or weary of me?'

Baba gave Pradhan occasional proofs of his superhuman powers. On the first visit, when he was start back from Shirdi, there was a severe storm and rain for quarter of an hour, and if that continued, the streams between Shirdi and Kopergaon would swell up, and having no bridges, it would be impossible for him to get back to Kopergaon or Bombay. so Pradhan feared that Baba would not give him leave to start. But when he went to Baba for leave, Baba looked at the sky and said, '*Arre Allah, abhi Bursat Purakar, Mere Bal Bachhe Ghar jane Wala hai. Unku Sukse Janedhe*, that is O' God enough. Stop this rain. My children have to go back home. Let them go back without difficulty'. As Baba spoke these words, the rain becomes gentler and feeble. Pradhan was able to go from Shirdi to Kopergaon without any obstacle on the way. he caught the Punjab mail and took udhi and tirtha to his mother as stated already.

This help to Pradhan and his mother by his use of power over elements and nature can only be called divine. Baba when they started on this occasion, said, 'I will accompany you home'. That is to say that the whole journey would be safe and actually the journey was quite safe. on the night after his return, his sister-in-law dreamed that a fakir robed in kafni and wearing a towel on his head like Baba was in the house. that seemed to show the truth of Baba's statement that he would come to Pradhan's home.

Baba was fond of the child Babu, and when taken for his first birthday that is, the second visit after his birth, Baba bought two rupees worth of burfi and distributed it to all. Then Baba asked, 'Has the child no brother and no sister?' Mrs. Pradhan bashfully answered 'You gave us only this Babu'. But Baba's words were very significant. After Babu's birth, Mrs. Pradhan had one male child and one more daughter. To commemorate Baba's birthday, Pradhan gave an grand dinner at Shama's and all were invited. that was a Thursday. Baba Saheb Bhate excused himself from attending it saying that on Thursdays he avoided dining out. When he went to Baba that day, Baba asked him, 'have you eaten at Pradhan's? Baba Saheb Bhate said, 'Today is Thursday'.

Baba: What if?

Bhate: I do not dine out on Thursdays. That is my rule.

Baba: To please whom?

Bhate: To please you.

Baba: Then I tell you go and dine at Pradhan's. Though it was 4 p.m. Bhate came and dined at Pradhan's.

Mrs. Pradhan had a dream in Santa Cruz that Baba came to Santa Cruz and that she did *Pada puja*. Chandorkar interpreted it to mean that Baba wanted her to go on with regular *Pada puja* at home, and so asked her to go to Shirdi with silver *padukas*. Accordingly she went and placed two silver *padukas* on Baba's outstretched legs and took them away. Baba then said to Chandorkar, 'Nana, see this mother has cut off and carried away my feet'. this expresses his appreciation of her *paduka* worship. Ever since then, Baba's *paduka* are being worshipped at Pradhan's house.

Pradhan's last visit to Baba was in 1918. He had taken with him Rs. 3,800. But he overstayed his intended period at Shirdi, and Baba went on taking *dakshina* from him, and the result was that he had given Rs. 5,000, taking a loan of Rs. 1,200 from the veterinary doctor of Poona.

Baba was considered as Datta *Avatar* by Das Ganu and by those who heard his kirtans and by Pradhan also, of course. When Babu was ill at Santa Cruz, the family priest, one Madhav Bhat, was asked to look after the child, and he went on with his *mantra japa* and *puja*. But he said that illness was due to the fact that the family was now worshipping Baba, a Mohammedan saint, but Pradhan told him, 'Baba is not a Mohammedan saint. He is Datta *Avatar*'. Bhat was not convinced. Later, one night, he had a dream. There was a figure which, from the picture of the family, he recognised to be Baba, sitting on the top of the staircase in the house, holding a *Sota* in his hand. The figure said him, 'What do you mean? I am the lord of this house'. The priest did not mention it at once. But he made a vow that if really Sai Baba is Datta and all power, then he should cure this child and the child should improve sufficiently by 4 p.m. so as to be brought downstairs where Bhate was. The priest added he would then agree that Baba was and is Datta. This he uttered before Baba's photo. This was his prayer. Within a very short time of this prayer, the child's temperature was getting lower, and by 4 p.m. the child said, 'Let us go down and play'. His mother took him down, Madhav Bhat was then convinced that Baba was Datta, and he vowed he would pay him a *dakshina* of Rs. 120. so, the priest, Madhav Bhat, accompanied a group that went to Shirdi, and there Bhat paid Rs. 120. Shama was

then with Baba. A little later, in the afternoon, Baba asked him 'Give me *dakshina*'; Shama said that Bhat had paid Rs. 120 in the morning. Baba said that he paid it to Datta, and added, 'Ask him'. Shama could not understand this. Afterwards Madhav Bhat explained to Shama the meaning of Baba's words that the sum of Rs. 120 was paid as a result of his vow that if Baba as Datta cured Pradhan's child, he would pay Rs. 120.

Madhav Bhat had no issue then. he vowed that he would pay Rs. 108 if he got a child. He vowed also that he would pay Rs. 1,008 if Pradhan's ambition should be achieved. With these vows in mind, he went to Baba and paid Rs. 108. sham said, 'He is giving this large sum of Rs. 108. Baba said, 'What is that? He is giving me much more'. Baba showed his antarjnana of Bhat's vow to pay Rs. 1,008.

Baba attended to the spiritual side of Pradhan's wife, and showed his concern at her shortness of temper. He told her, 'If anyone talks ten words at us, let us reply only with one word. Do not quarrel or battle with anyone'. Baba, after receiving Rs. 5,000 from Pradhan, made some gestures which were not clear. They seemed to mean "Even if the heavens tumble down over you, do not fear. I am with you'.

When Pradhan left Shirdi in 1916, Baba said, *Tuja Garam Jha Bara Me yein*, meaning, 'You go home, I will go with you'. He was not visible, but the whole journey was pleasing, showing that Baba looked after their safety and comfort. there was no danger or difficulty.

After Baba passed away, Pradhan got the following benefits. He became a second class magistrate of South Salsette for six years, 1920-26. In 1926, he became a Justice of the Peace. Then he was elected to the Bombay Legislative Council, 1921-23. He received the Sanad of Rao Bahadur in 1927.

Mrs. Pradhan gives some more instances of Baba's kindness. When her child Babu had measles, the doctor was feeling hopeless. She prayed to Baba. Baba appeared and said, 'Why weep? The child is all right. give him a good feed at 6.30 a.m.' The child began to play in the morning and the doctor was surprised.

One night, Baba appeared to Mrs. Pradhan in her dream and said, 'Are you sleeping? Get up. Your boy will have convulsions'. Then she got up. The boy at that time had no convulsions, but she kept hot water, fire, and *Eau de Cologne* ready. Three hours later, the boy woke up, and had convulsions. All the children in Pradhan's family have

convulsions occasionally, and as everything was ready, in half an hour, the fit passed off.

Once when she went to the Masjid, she was afraid that Baba would get angry. That day Baba said, 'See, I do not get angry with anyone.'

Once while she was doing *puja* at the Mosque, Baba stopped her and said, 'Go back to your quarters'. She went back and found her Babu was crying and that there was no one to look after the child. Then she went and pacified the child, and returned. Baba then said, 'Now do your *puja*'. So, Baba from the Mosque was keeping a watchful and kindly eye over all his devotees and their families, and looking after them. *Mungiki Pav me Avaj Hove, Obhi Sayi sunta hai*. This means, 'Sai hears even the ant's footfall'. Once she was taking a convalescent boy to Shirdi against the doctor's advice. The child was ill in the train. the child could not sit up and had to lie down. She feared that people would laugh at her conduct. when the child was taken up to Baba the child stood up before Baba, and was all right in health. Baba said, 'People would not laugh now'.

On 15-10-1918, that is, on the day of Baba's *Mahasamadhi* she saw in her dream Baba's body, and said, 'Baba is dying'. Baba replied, 'Saints do not die. They take *Mahasamadhi*'. Subsequent news confirmed the fact that Baba passed away on that day.

LIFE OF SAI BABA