

ABDULLA JAN

Abdulla Jan, originally of Tarbella, Mazra district near Peshawar, was a Pathan, living at Korhale, near Sakori, is next Muslim devotee of Baba who had some spiritual and some material touch with Baba. He had left Tarbella when a young boy, as he had none to support him. He simply roamed abroad, and wanted some one to help him to go to Mecca for that is one of the cardinal duties of all Muslims. He walked on and travelled up to Manmad. At Manmad, instead of going to Mumbai, as he originally intended, he heard that Sai Baba was at Shirdi, 30 miles further south and so, as he heard that Baba was showering money on *fakirs*, he hoped that Baba would send him to Mecca. He went to Shirdi in 1913. When he entered the gate of the *Masjid*, Baba was in the main building. Their eyes met. At once, he had the feeling that Baba was his *Guru*. So, he stayed on at Shirdi, as Baba was feeding every *fakir* abundantly and instead of going to Mecca. Abdulla Jan wanted to live an easy life at Shirdi. He was aged only 17. He had no serious views about life. But as he stayed at Shirdi, there were noticeable changes in his mentality, which illustrate Baba's way of promoting Hindu-Muslim Unity. When he first came to Shirdi, he like other Pathans, regarded Hindus as enemies and proper prey. After staying 3 years with Baba, this hatred passed away, and he began to view Hindus as his brethren. He gradually absorbed the national feeling and regretted very much that at Mumbai, Hindus and Muslims were fighting with each other destroying Mosques and temples, and he thought that if they wiped each other out the foreigners only would have the whole country to themselves.

When Baba passed away in 1918, he was 22. Even then he was not sufficiently serious to have any development on the religious side. He felt however grieved at Baba's disappearance and started off on his

travels again. In 1926, he was going back North. Then in the Swat valley (Malekand Agency) he found the tomb of a great saint, Akun Baba, who was a Sayyad, a direct descendant of Mohamed. His miraculous powers were the subject of popular legends. That Akun Baba is said to have locked up Lord Roberts on a hill for three months and 11 days. During Abdulla Jan's stay there, one night he had a dream in which a saint appeared. 'Who was it?' It was not Akun Baba that he had prayed to, but Sai Baba who was seated on a chair near his head. When he woke, he remembered the dream. So, he found he was still under Baba's care, though it was eight years since Baba passed away. As Sai was kind enough of his own accord to give him *Sakshatkar*, 1500 miles away from Shirdi, his reverence for Sai increased and his former idea that Sai Baba had deceived him by giving him no help during the five years of his stay, was found to be wrong. At This discovery he returned to India with full faith in Sai Baba.

In 1924 he married. He is now living at Korhale, four miles from Shirdi. He is lucky enough to have Baba's appearance before him once in two or four years and he moralises on the past and sees the vanity of human wishes. Baba was surrounded by crowds in his lifetime, and it was hard to find room in the Mosque on account of these crowds of men swarming around him, and a large number of dogs intermingled in the crowd. In 1936, when he was giving this statement to B. V. Narasimha Swamiji there was very few people to be seen. In 1936, he said that the Mosque, as a rule was deserted. He said, "If Baba's splendour was so short lived, then what about a gnat like me?"

R. A. Tarkhad called Baba Saheb Tarkhad, told B. V. Narasimha Swamiji of the following incident. One night when Baba Saheb Tarkhad and others were sleeping at the chavadi on one side of Baba, Mir Jaman of Kandahar who was then with Baba as a recent arrival was sleeping on the other side and suddenly got up at 3 a.m. and told Baba, "Hindus are spoiling you and the Islamic faith. Permit me, I will cut throats of all these and effect your release." Baba Saheb Tarkhad listened to those words with fear, and wondered if the wretch really meant to murder him in cold blood. Baba, however placated Mir Jaman by saying that he, Baba, was *pagal* and the Hindus worshipping him there were mad and that he was responsible for their worshipping him. Contrary not only to the tenets of Islam, but contrary to their own Hindu customs, the Hindus worshipped him. Baba said they were not responsible for his madness, but he was responsible for theirs. So, if anybody's throat is to be cut, Baba said, "my throat is to be cut". Saying this, Baba offered his throat. Then Mir Jaman kept quiet.

There was another intolerant Muslim, named Abdulla Khan of Nagpur, who stayed for three or four months with Baba. He was a journalist and familiar with Buty and Mahatma Gandhi. He was a Hindustani Pathan and not really a Rohilla. He died at Ahmednagar. During his stay at Shirdi he occasionally complained that Baba had deceived him. Once this man beat Nana Chopdar and was charged before the Kopergaon Magistrate. He was convicted and sentenced to pay a fine of Rs. 15. As he had no security to offer and so was in jail for a while. Buty sent him Rs. 15, but he declined to receive it saying, "He that had deceived me should pay the Rs. 15 and no other." So, Baba sent the Rs. 15 out of his own pocket and got him released.

When Baba was in the flesh, Abdulla Jan once expressed his fear that Baba would expire and all his work and influence would pass away with him. Baba said, "*Turban Hun Danda Hani*, which is the Marathi expression for, "From within the tomb I will beat with sticks." This meant the death of his body would not terminate his influence or activity.

It is better to note here whether Baba observed the five essential tenets of Islam so as to impress the Muslims. The five tenets are uttering the *Kalami* or declaration of faith, namely, There is no god but God and Mohamed is the Prophet; *Panch Namaz*, saying the *Namaz* five times a day, at dawn, at 10 a.m., at 12 noon, at 5 p.m. and at night, kneeling and bending the body at each utterance, fasting, especially all the forty days of *Ramzan*, and on other occasions about 8 or 10 times in the year; alms-giving; Haj, that is, going to Mecca. Whoever has funds, must go to Mecca. Others, if they can get the funds, must go to Mecca. These are the five tenets of Islam. Of these, Baba observed only alms-giving, that is, when he got funds after 1908 and up to 1918. His alms-giving was a princely scale and he supported over two hundred homeless beggars at Shirdi and distributed not merely vegetarian food, but also meat for non-vegetarians specially prepared as *samaradhana* from his Hundi, by himself. He also distributed clothes to the poor periodically. In addition to regular donations to certain persons, he also gave liberally to dancers, athletes, acrobats and *Ramadasis*, and all sorts of people that came to him for alms. His reputation as a liberal Maharaj was known very far from Shirdi and attracted people like Madras *Ramadasis* and this man Tarbella Abdulla Jan.

As for going to Mecca, Baba never cared to go to Mecca and had no need to go to Mecca. As for the principles of Islam, and how far Baba

observed them or accepted them, the question is very difficult to answer. Amongst Muslims themselves, there are various sects, and some of them like Quadians, following Mirza Ahmed who claims to be the resurrected Messiah or Mohamed held views resembling Hinduism in many particulars. *Sunnis* and *Shias* agree on certain particulars and differ in others. It is very difficult to take up doctrines of each set, and see how much of it is in accordance with Baba's views, especially those, which may be found in the Gospel of Sai Baba or his sayings. Taking the Qadian, that is Mirza Ahmed's book, we find that practically the major portion of his tenets expresses only what Baba was acting upon and declaring all his life. This Qadian book was published after Baba left the flesh. Mirza Ahmed says that one must believe in the true and living god, and the proof of the truth and life of God lies in the fact that God is All powerful and responds to prayers. Surely, these were Baba's doctrines and he in fact was and is himself responding to prayer and is possessed of vast divine powers. Whether the Quadians would treat Baba as an Angel of the highest degree or in any other way, cannot be known, as no Qadian has expressed his view about Baba. But Baba himself has stated, "God has agents everywhere" and agents would include angels. "They have vast powers. I have vast powers." These appear to be in full consonance with Islam, and they are Baba's doctrines. The Qadian description of God nowhere differs from the ideas of God expressed by Baba. So, Baba has taken up for his basis, ideas of God common to many, if not all Muslims and Hindus. The differences in doctrine or practise between sect and sect are matters of no importance. The essence of religion, however, is in the height reached by the truly pious man; and the truly pious Hindu and the truly pious Muslim, reach heights of love to God by surrender to God, and such persons are recognised as perfect followers of their respective religions, as judged by dicta of all religions. Baba himself was perfect. By reaching God, enjoying the bliss of God and thoroughly surrendering his will to God. Baba had placed himself in a position that could be appreciated by all great religions. Hindu or Muslim or other. Therefore, the question as to how far Muslim can or will appreciate Baba in the near future, is capable of a very hopeful solution. So long as the anti-Indian and the partition of India movement was afoot, bitterness between Hindus and Muslims was sedulously developed as part of the political platform. But as matters stand at present, things appear to be settling down, and in any case, hatred cannot remain long as the plank on which any State Government policy could be built. The anti-Hindu feeling of Muslims is steadily dwindling down and as the years pass, we may be sure that more and more people of other sects will be drawn to Sai Baba who at present is mostly a Hindu possession, in the sense that it is the Hindus

who are managing the Sai Sansthan without a single Muslim amongst the trustees or on the committee of management. The books and journals dealing with Baba are all in the hands of Hindus and as for the followers of Baba, the Hindus outnumber the Muslims out of all proportion to the strength of their population. In the Indian Union, the Muslims are about 15% of the population. Amongst the followers of Baba, however they are perhaps less than 5%. The rapidity with which the Sai faith is spreading amongst the Hindus is phenomenal. Year after year, lakhs are drawn to Baba, and, if anyone visits Shirdi now, he would note how the whole place and the Dwarakamayee are crowded daily, much more now than they were crowded even in Baba's time. They are mostly Hindus. But even amongst other groups, those who are a bit cultured, are contributing their quota to the number of Sai bhaktas, and to the literature on the subject of the Sai Faith. The Parsis are a very cultured portion of the Indian Community and though small in number, they are prominent among Sai *bhaktas* and even in contributing literature. A Parsi lady has written a fine booklet in which Baba is treated as the *Guru-God*, the All-in-All of the writer.

As far the other communities, Christians form according to the census of a very small minority and amongst Sai devotees, they form still a smaller minority. But still there are Christians who have benefitted from Sai's light and Sai's Grace. They are visiting the Sai Shrine and regarding him as their guardian angel and Saviour. Naturally the Roman Catholics being more like Hindus, are drawn more easily to Baba and in greater numbers than the Protestants. But so far as doctrine or dogma is concerned, Baba's catholicity, Baba's wide liberality and freedom from any rigid doctrines, make it quite as easy for the Protestant as for the Catholic to resort to him and derive benefits from him. The only thing needed is the requisite degree of faith.

LIFE OF SAI BABA