

Experience of Balakrishna Vaidya

18th October, 1936

BALAKRISHNA WAMAN VAIDYA, C/o. C. K. Prabhu, aged 58, retired Railway servant, (G.I.P.)
Bandra, says:

In 1910-1911 was my first visit to Shirdi, I had then taken my entire family and we stayed for 4 or 5 days. Baba was kind to us all and gave us His blessings. Even prior to starting, His grace was evident. I applied for leave to G.I.P. Rly authorities and for passes. But, urgent work appeared to require my continued stay and to be an obstacle to leave being granted. But, my head clerk was a "Sai Bhaktha" and he passed my application and leave was granted. Baba's grace helped us in the journey also. It was night (or nearly nightfall) when we reached Kopergaon. The road to Shirdi was unsafe; robbers might attack us. So the tonga man whom we sought to engage told us to wait till the morrow. I told him that Baba would protect us and asked him to start. Then other passengers who were there said they would also start with our *tonga*. Thus, we had some company or protection even at the outset. But, as our *tonga* went on, we found several carts coming towards Kopergaon and others going in the same direction as ourselves, Baba's aid was thus clear. No highway man could or did trouble us.

When we reached Shirdi, it was 1 a.m. and we got into Sathe's Wada. I insisted on my family joining me at once in taking *faral* (*i.e.*,) a light meal, as the day following was a *Sankashti* Chaturti, a fasting day, and we then retired to rest after the *faral*. Early morning, Baba got up and took the resident devotees or some of them to task for not providing us with a meal as soon as we arrived. Said He: "*My children arrived. None (of you) looked after them. You gave them nothing to eat, and made them fast*". (In one sense, this was true as persons who eat only *fared* and not a regular meal are considered as fasting or *upavas*). Baba, with these angry words, drove from His proximity those devotees who were there. This showed us the intense

paternal love He had for us and His watching over our interests. The expelled devotees came to us and reported Baba's words and action; and they begged us to tell Baba that we had taken our light meal on arrival, and had been well treated. So we reported to Baba as soon as we went to him, (*i.e.*,) at *darshan*. Baba blessed me as soon as He saw me and said 'Good will befall you' and He blessed us all similarly. Later, when we had prepared food at our wadas Baba came round and begged for food 'Bhakari Bajji' and my wife promptly gave Him these articles, (*i.e.*,) bread and vegetables.

One day, we prepared special *naivedya* for Baba and we were late in getting ready. Others had taken their *naivedya* to Baba. Baba waited for ours and kept them waiting, saying *wait*. Then when I took mine, He bade me place mine nearest to him, and he gave us *prasad* and blessings.

Look at his kindness and care for us. When we were starting I begged for leave to go with my family to Nasik. Baba forbade it saying: 'Go, Go, Go to Nasik. What for should you go to Nasik? There is plague there. Do not go there, go back home just as you have come (*i.e.*) the way you came, taking your little ones with you'.

During one of these 3 or 4 days of our stay at Shirdi, I was talking with Madhavrao Deshpande and expressed my desire to take a photo of Baba, touched by Him and given to me, for the purpose of worshipping it at home. Baba, who was near, insisted on my going and fetching a photo at once. I brought it; He touched it and gave it to me. I am worshipping it daily even now. I never take food without first worshipping Him in that photo.

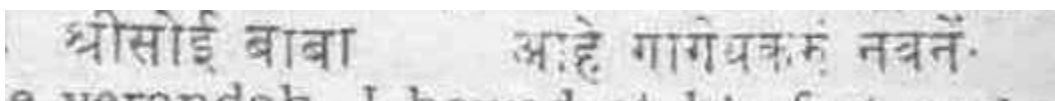
Baba guided and guarded us on our way back. When we took leave, He said 'Bhau had better go now'. We took a tonga and arrived in time at Kopergaon just to miss our intended train as it left the platform as we reached the station. This looked like a bad augury and we spent the night there for some hours and took the early down train for Manmad. Fancy our grateful surprise when we learnt that the previous train to Bombay which we intended to

board, had an accident with the result that one carriage in it was smashed, Baba's all watchful eye and kind care for 'His children' had saved from possible harm in that accident.

One incident at Shirdi during this visit is curious. One of Baba's devotees came to me and said, 'Give me some money and I will give you bandar (*i.e.* a sacred power applied to the forehead as a blessing). I was resenting this demand and said 'No'. The man was going away. Suddenly, my mind changed, and I recalled him. 'I will give you some coins, give me bandar', I said. But, he declined saying that he had no such orders from Baba. Then, I went to Baba and reported what happened. Baba said 'Alright'.

My next visit was in 1912. This time no member of my family accompanied me. Two office friends were my fellow pilgrims then. My idea was to tell Baba, on this occasion, about my misfortunes, troubles and miseries. But, Baba anticipated me and said: 'Be quiet. Don't fear'. I replied that I had no fear as He was protecting me. We had all taken only a day's leave and so I begged leave of Baba to go away. But Baba did not give me leave. I knew Baba would somehow save me from trouble and so I stayed on. But, my friends expressed their fears to me of being cashiered for staying away without leave. But seeing that I stayed, they also decided to cast in their lots with me and remained with me. Baba prevented us from going back for 2 or 3 days more. Then He permitted us to go. When we returned we applied for extension of leave and got it without any trouble. This was Baba's Lila or power.

The second visit was my last visit to Shirdi. In 1916, I made Bandra my residence. Then, say in 1917 or 1918, a saint came before our lodgings and asked for a pie. My son gave him one pie and said: 'I know who you are', as he felt sure it was Sai Baba though in an unrecognizable form. Then Baba said



As He said this at the verandah, I bowed at His feet and asked Him to walk into the house, and He came inside, whereupon I again bowed at His feet. He asked me 'Are you satisfied?' I replied 'yes'. Then He demanded *sidha* (i.e.,) materials (e.g.) wheat flour to prepare food. I gave Him. He blessed me and went away telling me: 'I am here with you always. You need not come to Shirdi. This was about in 1917-1918. I never went thereafter to Shirdi.

We have had many misfortunes and troubles all these years. But, Sai Baba is at my back and I have faced them all courageously and cheerfully.

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