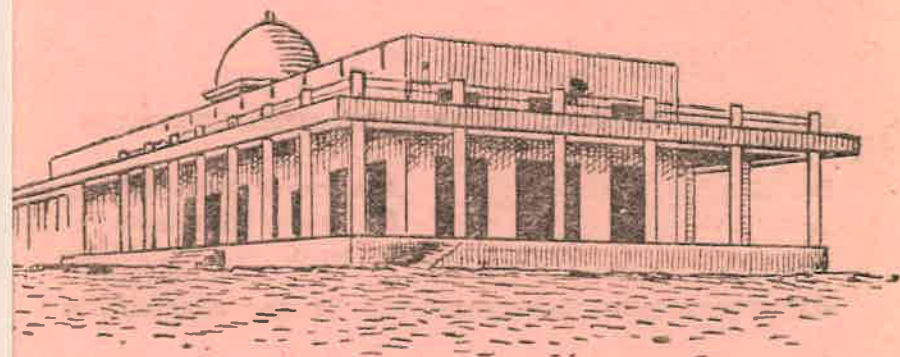


SRI AMBURAO MAHARAJ

(Life-Sketch & Practical Philosophy)

" Disciples "



Gurudev Mandir - Belgaum

**Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion
Belgaum.**

1978

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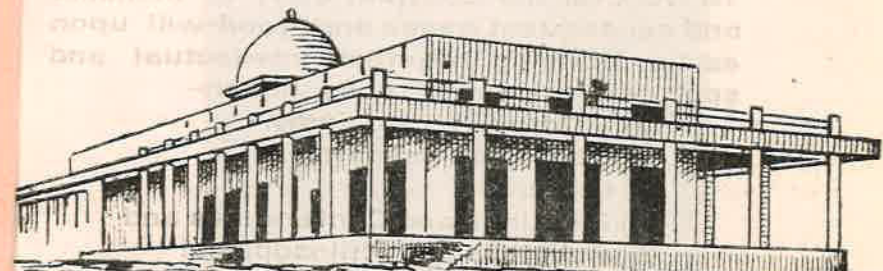
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**Academy of Comparative Philosophy
and Religion, Belgaum**

(Public Trust : Founded by Sri Gurudev R. D. Ranade,
Saint of Nimbal).

Aims and objects

**To work for the spiritual Unity of mankind
and consequent peace and good-will upon
earth, bringing together intellectual and
spiritually-minded persons through-**

- (1) Spiritual Symposiums.
- (2) Study and Research.
- (3) Lectures.
- (4) Meetings and Conferences and
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SRI AMBURAO MAHARAJ



*Born : Jigjeewani
1856*

*Samadhi : Inchageri
22-12-1933*

Publisher's Note.



We have great pleasure in publishing this small yet valuable book about Sri Amburao Maharaj on behalf of the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion, Belgaum, a Public Trust founded by late Sri Gurudev, Dr. R. D. Ranade in 1952.

It has been also brought out from the Silver Jubilee Souvenir of the Academy—Volume one, Part one—containing the inspiring Lives and Teachings of the Masters of Sri Gurudeva's Sampradāya, of which Sri Nimbargi Mahārāj was the illustrious originator.

We have published this book specially for the benefit of those aspirants, who cannot afford to purchase the Souvenir, but who earnestly desire to be inspired by the universal message enshrined in it.

It is hoped that the book would be properly utilised by all the aspirants in their daily Sāadhanā.

Gurudev Mandir : Belgaum.

16-4-1978

(राम नवमी, शके १९००)



PREFACE

This book is a third reprint from our Souvenir. It contains the Life-sketch and Practical Philosophy of Sri Amburao Maharaj alias Sri Baba who was the chosen chief disciple of Sri Bhausahab Maharaj as well as a senior spiritual brother of Sri Gurudev Dr. Ranade. The Life-sketch deals with a few important features of his life. His sudden conversion, his intense Sadhana, his absolute self-surrender to his Sadguru as well as his splendid spiritual experiences have been graphically described in it.

The Practical Philosophy inherited by him from his Great Masters and actually lived by him, has been culled out from his casual talks and discourses to his disciples and arranged topically. It is calculated to present clearly the nature of his intellectual, moral and spiritual discipline and also to depict the nature of different aspects of spiritual experiences.

Sri Baba had completely merged his individuality in that of his Sadguru whom he regarded as God Himself. His selfless devoted service had elicited warm praise from his Sadguru.

We, therefore, hope that this book also, like those of his Masters would prove to be very useful and inspiring to all the Sadhakas.

K. D. Sangoram
M. S. Deshpande



SRI AMBURAO MAHARAJ
1856 - 1933

BRIEF LIFE - SKETCH

R. P. Kulkarni and K. D. Sangoram

Prelude

Sri Amburao Maharaj alias Sri Baba was a premier disciple of Sri Bhausahab Maharaj of Umadi, as well as a senior spiritual brother of Sri Gurudev Ranade. He has been aptly described as "faith incarnate", "penance resplendent", as well as "a flute singing the spiritual glory of his Master." Sri Baba's life is a fine illustration of how a genuine *Sadguru* like Sri Bhausahab Maharaj realises at first sight the potential spiritual greatness of his prospective disciple like Sri Baba, pursues him, initiates him against his will and finally raises him to the status of a *Sadguru*. Let us see how Sri Baba, through the grace of Sri Maharaj, evolved himself into this exalted position and blessed thousands of aspirants in course of time. Let us also have a glimpse at his spiritual teaching.

Birth and early life

Sri Amburao Maharaj was born in 1856 in a poor yet pious and devout family at Jigjeewani, a village in Indi Tahasil of Bijapur District. Nothing uncommon or miraculous happened at the time of his birth. He spent his childhood in the company of his village companions playing in the dusty streets. Being born in a Kulkarni family, Baba was expected to have some elementary education expected then of a Kulkarni (Village Accountant). As there was no facility for schooling in that village, he was sent to Nimbargi to stay at his uncle Bapurao, an ardent disciple of the great Saint Sri Nimbargi Maharaj, for schooling. While going to school, he used to have *Darshan* of Sri Nimbargi Maharaj, the founder of the *Sampradāya* to which Baba belonged. At that time Baba used to bow down to the Saint, who then cast his penetrating glance at him and gave his blessings and sugar as *Prasād*. On completion of his primary education, he returned home to face the odds of life.

Baba lost his parents-Shriniwasrao and Radhabai-in his early age and was left to the care and protection of his elder brother, Gopalrao. When he was barely twenty, he was required to face severe trials and tribulations of life-an ordeal which none of an ordinary courage could face. A very severe drought overtook the whole of Bijapur District. A man of iron will and undaunted courage, Baba decided to face the famine bravely. He left his native village with his younger brother Krishnappa, in search of food and shelter. Young Baba along with his younger brother reached the Shankaracharya Math at Sankeshwar with great distressful suffering on the way. In the Math Baba, who looked strong and stout, was allotted the work of fetching water from the river and his brother was given some light menial work. Baba by nature, was endowed with high moral qualities. By his honesty and sincerity he secured the sympathies of the *Swāmiji* of the Math, who used to address him as "Jagajeev-vana"- "Life of the World". When the drought condition receded,

and the normal condition was restored, Baba with his brother returned home. But very soon he had to share the heavy responsibility of maintaining the entire family along with his elder brother. He therefore joined service in famine relief works on daily wages at two annas only. He was required to work in scorching heat of the sun from dawn to dusk every day. But even that service also was soon terminated as that Department stopped its work.

Brief Respite and Despondency

Thereafter, Baba left Jigjeewani and stayed at Inchageri in order to manage the family affairs of his widowed sister, Jiwubai and her minor son Annappa. There he worked as an officiating Kulkarni of Inchageri, representing his minor nephew, Annappa. By his honest and sincere work as a Kulkarni he secured the sympathies of the entire village public there. In due course of time Baba was married to Ahalyabai and felt quite happy in his family life. He got a female child to Ahalyabai, but it was not destined to live long. Fortune did not favour him. Jealous God did not allow him to love his wife and daughter for a long time. He snatched away from him his wife and daughter, one after another. Thus Baba was left alone and his hopes and aspirations of a happy family life toppled down like a house of cards. The untimely separation of the life-partner in such a youthful age told much upon Baba's mind. He looked extremely disappointed and dejected.

Prophetic Indication

His sister was much worried to see him always gloomy. Somehow, she came to know that some of Baba's friends had planned to visit Ganagapur, a holy place of Lord Sri Dattatraya, for the annual *Dattajayanti* festival. With a view to divert Baba's mind she told him to go to Ganagapur with his friends.

so that he might find some relief to his ailing mind. Accordingly Baba accompanied his friends to Ganagapur. He had heard that prophetic directions for solution of difficulties are given there by Sri Dattatraya, if "*Gurucharitra*" is regularly read and finished as prescribed in that Sacred Book. Baba, accordingly, completed the reading (*Pārāyana*) of the "*Gurucharitra*" as prescribed, within three days. But to his great disappointment he did not have any direction or indication about his second marriage which he had kept in mind. On the contrary, a *Sanyāsi* appeared in his dream on the third day, handed over to him a rosary of beads and disappeared. In spite of this prophetic indication of meditation on Divine Name received from a *Sadguru*, Baba was sorely disappointed for want of any indication regarding a happy family life. Hence, he returned to Inchageri in a despondent mood.

Sudden Conversion

Jiwubai was much more worried to see her brother in a worse condition. In a few months time, however, the "*Hanuman Jayanti*" festival, known in that part as "*Sri Bhimarāyā's*" festival, started at Nimbargi as usual. On that occasion the devotees are usually served with sweet *prasād* at meals in the temple. Hence she told Baba: "There is now *Bhimarāyā's* festival at Nimbargi. Go there, pray for *Sri Bhimarāyā's* grace and receive a full meal of sweet *Prasād* there. That will lessen your mental despondency". Baba agreed to do so.

Accordingly, Baba took his bath early in the morning, started for Nimbargi on foot and reached there about an hour before noon. As he was approaching the temple, he saw a gentleman sitting on a square platform in front of the temple, chewing betel-leaves and tobacco and conversing with some people sitting on the ground near him. As Baba also was in the habit of chewing betel-leaves and tobacco, he approached the gentleman and requested him to give them to him. There

were also some among them who were acquainted with Baba. One of them apparently introducing him said: "Maharaj, he is Amburaya Kulkarni of Inchageri". Sri Maharaj intently looked at him, as if he was expecting the arrival of his prospective chosen disciple, asked him to sit down and offered him betel leaves and tobacco. From the talk of the people there, Baba also came to know that the gentleman was none else but Sri Bhausahab Maharaj. Thereupon Sri Maharaj cast a penetrating glance at Baba and lovingly asked him: "Well! Amburaya, you seem to be greatly worried and gloomy! Will you tell me what ails you so much?" This affectionate enquiry brought tears in his innocent eyes. He readily poured his agony before Sri Maharaj, related all the painful incidents and humbly sought his guidance. Sri Maharaj listened to his tale of sorrow with warm sympathy and said, "You have already received due instructions from Lord Dattatraya. Why don't you follow them?" Baba had not yet disclosed this fact, there. He was, therefore, surprised at the supernatural powers of Sri Maharaj and with increased reverence he said: "Yes! Maharaj. I have been blessed with a *Drishtānta* (दृष्टान्त) at Ganagapur which indicated that I should meditate on Divine Name received from a *Sadguru*. But then how could it remove my sorrow!" "Infinite is the power of *Nāma*," asserted Sri Maharaj. "What could it not do? If you devoutly meditate on it and observe the vow of not touching others' wealth and woman, it would invite the blessing of the Lord, who would grant you His vision and bliss. Would it not drive away all your sorrow?" This emphatic assertion reduced his tension and brought about a sort of consolation to him. Observing this change in him, Sri Maharaj further said: "I may grant you the Divine *Nāma* if you want". Just then, there was an announcement that *Prasād* was ready and will be served to the devotees in the temple. Sri Maharaj then said to Baba: "Since you seem to be hungry, take *Prasād* now, calmly think over the matter and then come to me. I shall be waiting for you here." Baba agreed to do so.

But as soon as he left for the temple, he was assailed by various kinds of doubts. They started to undermine his favourable reactions about the advice of Sri Maharaj. He thought: "If I marry and lead a family life, I will not be able to devote myself fully to meditation on *Nāma*; and if I abstain from marriage and devote myself to meditation, it might not be possible for me to observe the vows strictly. Marriage or *Nāma*? What to choose? What to do?". These were the thoughts that were oscillating in his mind even while taking the *Prasād*. But ultimately, temptation for married life became irresistible and he decided not to receive *Nāma*. He also decided not to approach Sri Maharaj while returning, lest he might be again persuaded to receive *Nāma*.

Sri Maharaj, however, was sitting on the platform, waiting for Baba. But Baba rapidly passed by him, without even looking at him. Sri Maharaj observed this. He asked his disciples to stop him and bring him to him. Sri Maharaj then asked him: "Why did you try to run away from me? You had agreed to come to me after *Prasād*. Is it not so, Amburaya?" Full of remorse, Baba tried to explain: "Maharaj, I am sorry. I felt that I would not be able to observe the vows strictly and hence, I dropped the idea of receiving the *Nāma*." "Is that so?" asked Sri Maharaj and then said firmly, "Don't you worry! I will take the full responsibility of your observance of the vows. Will you now agree to receive *Nāma* and be free from your present sorrowful condition?" Unable to resist this pressing assurance of Sri Maharaj, Baba finally agreed. Sri Maharaj, then, showered his grace on him, initiated him through the medium of his spiritual brother, Bhaurao of Savalsang and said: "Amburaya, now go on with meditation on this *Nāma*".

Intense *Sādhana* and Illumination

The Divine Name granted to Sri Baba brought about a sudden and great mental transformation in him. Sri Maharaj's words, "Now go on with the meditation on this

Name," were all the while ringing in his ears. With the *Nāma* in his breath and his eyes fixed at the tip of his nose, he left Nimbargi for Inchageri. He came to Nimbargi to have the taste of sweet material *Prasād* but returned with the nectarlike spiritual *Prasād* viz., "*Nāmāmrita*." He continued this meditation without a break throughout the journey till he reached Inchageri.

Jiwubai now saw Baba entirely a changed man. He showed no interest in his outside activities. He liked to avoid company and live in solitude. He was engaged in meditation for three months in spite of severe eye-sore, by which he was troubled thrice during this period. But he did not swerve even an inch from following strictly the instructions of his *Sadguru*, Sri Maharaj. Seeing all this, Jiwubai thought that Baba had lost his balance of mind and that he was getting mad. While referring to this state of things, Baba later on used to tell that he was not then mad after marriage but was certainly mad after *Nāma*.

During these three months Baba had spiritual experiences of a very high order. 'Floods of spiritual lights' enveloped him on all sides and he could not visualise anything else in the external world. As he was not aware of such spiritual experiences before, he was bewildered and could not understand what it was. To continue meditation in such a condition would be, in his opinion, inviting complete loss of his eyesight; and to give it up would amount to disobedience of the instructions given by *Sadguru*, which, he thought, was more harmful than the loss of eyesight. He thus happened to be in a fix.

Verification of Experience

Fortunately, one day Baba heard the news that Sri Maharaj had been at Savalsang, a village quite near Inchageri. Baba took this opportunity and immediately went there with

a view to seek a solution to this vital problem. He humbly lay prostrate at the feet of Sri Maharaj and stood before him in a dejected mood. "What is the matter with you? Amburaya, why this dejection now?" enquired Sri Maharaj. Baba, thereupon, explained the whole situation and expressed his fear at the possible loss of his eyesight. Sri Maharaj listened to him attentively and smiled. In fact, he was overjoyed at heart. Expressing his admiration, he told his disciples there, "Look here: What a brilliant experience this young man has attained within such a short time!" He then asked one of his disciples to sing a song containing spiritual experiences. Incidentally, that song described the spiritual experiences of "Floods of Light". Sri Maharaj specifically pointed out to Baba, that the Floods of Light, which he experienced, was a spiritual experience of God and assured him: "Believe me, it is God Himself!" Thrice he told this and thrice he asked Baba to believe in his words. From that moment Baba implicitly believed in the words of Sri Maharaj and decided to continue his meditation without any fear or anxiety. At the time of his departure, however, Sri Maharaj gave him this specific advice. "Henceforth, you need not meditate continuously throughout the day. You should practise the prescribed meditation for nine hours every day; at other times you should only try to remember *Nāma*. As per this advice of Sri Maharaj, Baba since then practised the prescribed meditation for nine hours every day without fail.

Dialogue With *Sadguru*:

Baba, as a popular Kulkarni, had made many friends at Inchageri. But now he was entirely a changed man. As his mind was turned Godward, he did not like to have any disturbance in his daily nine hours' meditation. In order to avoid the company of friends, he started to go out for meditation in the hilly track round about Inchageri. He used to go out early in the morning, sit for meditation in a valley for six

hours and return home after 12 noon. In the evening he practised meditation for three hours in his own room at Inchageri. Thus he continued his daily nine hours meditation for a number of years thereafter.

As Baba progressed in his meditation and consequently in his spiritual experiences as well, he felt a keen aspiration for the company of his *Sadguru*. He accordingly expressed his desire, before Maharaj, to stay with him. But as the circumstances were not yet favourable, Sri Maharaj did not allow him to do so. But he told Baba that on every Saturday he was going to Nimbargi for the *Darshan* of the *Samādhi* of Sri Nimbargi Maharaj and that he should go over there the same day, so that both would be meeting each other once in a week. Accordingly, Baba visited Nimbargi every Saturday, meditated in the holy company of Sri Maharaj, and got his difficulties solved, until Sri Maharaj established his *Math* (मठ) at Inchageri in 1903. He also used to attend the "*Shrāvan Saptāh*" arranged by Sri Maharaj in his own house at Umadi and take the advantage of meditating in the holy company of Sri Maharaj and other *Sādhakās*, continuously for nine hours without a break every day.

As Baba progressed in meditation and spiritual experiences, his innate keen intellect got a great stimulus. On account of introspection, doubts began to crop up in his mind and naturally he tried to get them clarified by Sri Maharaj. One day Sri Maharaj in the course of his discourse on *Dāsa-Bodha* told that Sri Nimbargi Maharaj brought the Divine *Nāma* from "*Swarga*" (Heaven) and hence he had got the authority to impart it to others. Innocent and open-hearted as Baba was, he frankly asked "Maharaj, you just told me how Sri Nimbargi Maharaj got the authority to initiate others. Please let me know whence have you brought the *Nāma* and who gave you the authority to impart it to others". As it was then time for meditation, Maharaj, without giving any reply,

went to his room and Baba also went to the terrace of Bhimaraya temple for meditation.

Warning and Self-Surrender:

In course of meditation, Baba had a vision of Sri Nimbargi Maharaj and heard his following words: "Oh, you, Baba, why have you let loose your tongue? You have no business to question the authority of Bhauraya (Sri Maharaj). I have given him the authority to initiate. Shut up! Simply mind your meditation". Baba shuddered to see the vision of the wrathful figure of Sri Nimbargi Maharaj and to hear his threatening words. Overwhelmed with intense repentance, he straightway went to Sri Maharaj, lay prostrate at his feet, stood trembling before him and with tears in his eyes implored Sri Maharaj to pardon him. "Don't you worry," said Sri Maharaj. "I hope you are convinced now". Baba again prostrated at his feet with his heart full of awe and gratitude. From that day onwards, Baba stopped asking questions, surrendered himself completely to Sri Maharaj and regarded him as a living embodiment of God Himself. Since then, word of Sri Maharaj was law to Baba.

Now, Baba had ceased to take any interest in worldly affairs. His interest and attraction centred round Sri Maharaj, *Nāma* and meditation only. Sri Maharaj was all in all to him. He had practically merged his individuality in Maharaj. This sentiment has been clearly expressed by him in the following extract of his letter to Sri Maharaj:—"I have heretofore spontaneously expressed that I have completely dedicated myself to *Sadguru* Maharaj and consequently a firm conviction has been rooted in my mind that Sri *Sadguru* Maharaj is always taking care of myself. Whatever I write in letters, that is the wish of *Sadguru* Maharaj, inspired by him in me and expressed only through me. Whatever I speak or do, it is His wish and inspiration. There is nothing as mine in them, separately". He had thus reached the acme of Self-Surrender.

Dedicated service to the Math (मठ)

On account of some adverse circumstances Sri Maharaj was required to shift his centre of activity from Nimbargi to Inchageri-the place of his Sudama-his chosen disciple-Baba. Sri Maharaj established his *math* (मठ) there and Baba was entrusted with the work of management of the *Math*, as if like a *Mathādhikāri*. He played a supremely important role in the growth and glory of the *Math*. His untiring, dedicated and sincere labour in this respect to the entire satisfaction of Sri Maharaj, elicited the following appreciation from him: "Your service has immensely gladdened my heart. Now, my heart's desires have been completely fulfilled."

Role as a *Sadguru*

After the demise of Sri Maharaj in 1914, Sri Baba was not prepared to initiate fresh aspirants even though Sri Maharaj had given him permission to initiate, as he had then the Super-sensuous experience of audition of the Divine *Nāma*. But he very well knew that initiation was one of the most responsible duties of a *Sadguru*. His reluctance in this respect at that time appears to be due to his keen desire to get a fresh definite mandate from Sri Maharaj in his Spiritual Form. This desire was also soon fulfilled, when Sri Maharaj appeared in his vision (*Dristānt*) and told him that permission was granted to him to continue his mission of initiation and spread of the gospel of God-devotion. But Baba was a shrewd and talented disciple of Sri Maharaj. He was not satisfied merely with this sort of simple permission. He wanted a fresh assurance from Sri Maharaj. Realising this, Sri Maharaj again appeared in his vision (*Drishtānt*) and told him: "Rest assured! Your words are my words. Begin initiation." On account of this unequivocal assurance from Sri Maharaj, Baba finally decided and began to initiate aspirants, since the *Dattajayanti Saptāh* in 1915. Nevertheless, he always felt and told his disciples, that *Nāma*

granted by him is the one received by him from Sri Maharaj. Hence Sri Maharaj himself was their *Sadguru* and not he.

With this attitude of absolute self-surrender, Sri Baba continued the holy mission of Sri Maharaj. He unfurled the banner of God-devotion, proclaimed at the top of his voice the greatness and glory of Sri Maharaj in different places throughout Maharashtra and Karnataka, and attracted even a large number of educated disciples to spiritual life, as preached by Sri Maharaj. Thus he continued the holy mission of Sri Maharaj with untiring zeal for about 19 years after the passing away of Sri Maharaj. Hence, he could have to his credit about five thousand disciples. He left his mortal coil on 22-12-1933 in the same manner as his *Sadguru* had done. From God he was taken and to God he went.

Splendid Spiritual Experiences

Generally, saints do not relate all their spiritual experiences to others. Sri Baba was not an exception to this tradition. He has however, related only a few for the encouragement and edification of his disciples who have recorded them. We should like to share some of them with the readers.

We have already seen how within three months after his initiation, Sri Baba had the vision of "Floods of Spiritual Light", that enveloped him on all sides. As his spiritual *Sādhana* progressed he had splendid spiritual experiences, rich both in variety and grandeur. He had the vision of flashes of lightening and of various brilliant colours. The Spiritual Sun and the Moon were visible to him even in the pitchy darkness of the night. He had enjoyed the delight of listening to the absorbing symphonies of 'Anāhat Nāda' and also heard the enchanting sweet music of a Divine flute—probably played by Sri Gopal Krishna- in his vision. At that time, he

asked one of his disciples to sing the following song often and often on that day: "नको वाजवू श्रीहरि मुरली" (pray Sri Hari, stop playing on the flute). He used to hear Divine Names and could easily comprehend the Names granted to other seekers by their spiritual teachers. One day he heard a few poetic lines which he recorded on a slip of paper and showed it to Sri Maharaj, who though glad at heart to know this experience of Baba, tore off that paper and prohibited him from recording in writing any such spiritual experiences. He also tasted the spiritual ambrosia, which infused a great spiritual energy in him.

Sri Baba said that during his meditation at night he saw figures of saints and sages, Gods and Goddesses, passing before his vision like pictures in a cinema show. He had also enjoyed the vision of "Vaikuntha", as described by Kanakdas in his song which contains brilliant description of cumulative spiritual experiences. Here is that description of *Vaikuntha*, as visualised by saint Kanakdas. "Vaikuntha" he says, "was wonderfully beautiful on account of beautiful gardens, great overflowing lakes and imposing majestic palaces with golden turrets. I saw the refulgent main door of the palace and inside it the beams of diamonds set in jewels of different kinds and the houses of the best gods, and last of all "God Rangashai" who is the destroyer of the wicked. I saw in the palace of God, the nymphs Rambha and Urvashi, sages Tumbara and Narada and the main gods. I saw the form of Vishnu who uses the Serpent as his bed and Siva, who uses it as his ornament round the neck. I saw there also a large assembly of devotees." This delightful vision of *Vaikuntha* threw Sri Baba into ecstasy and in that blissful superconscious state, we are told, he was actually, dancing. Once while explaining the meaning of "Anubhava" (अनुभव), Sri. Baba told his disciples: "When you have the vision of the Spiritual World exactly resembling this material world, it is

called "Anubhava." But mind; this material world is merely a faint replica of the original Spiritual World."

Finally, Sri Baba reached the acme of God-realisation and had the full-fledged vision (दर्शन) of the *Ātman* every where. Not only this, he had the experience of touch (स्पर्शन) and also conversation (संभाषण) with the *Ātman*. He could thus enjoy supreme bliss and peace from such superb visions, culminating in perfect unison with the *Ātman*.

Eminent Personality

Sri Baba, as we have seen, had enjoyed splendid spiritual experiences culminating in the unison and bliss of the *Ātman*. He had thus become a liberated Soul (जीवन्मुक्त). The liberation had brought about all-round development of all his faculties, granting him a personality all his own. His original keen intellect had become keener still. It could solve all the difficulties of his disciples in no time. He could even satisfactorily solve the difficulties in the *Upanishads* of one of his scholar-disciples who afterwarde told his friends that "it was an intellectual treat." Once he was asked: "which is superior-Fate or Effort?" He at once remarked, neither Fate nor Effort is superior. It is God who is superior to both." On another occasion a disciple asked: "Baba, what is meant by *Samādhi*?" He at once replied, "when you have the full-fledged vision of your *Ātman* exactly as you are, that state is called *Samādhi*". In this way he could answer all such questions to the entire satisfaction of his disciples. Moral virtues in him had also attained similar perfection. He literally refused to touch the wealth of others. He did not receive a gift of a woolen coat (Bandi) even from Maharaj himself, without paying its price. He avoided to sit for meditation in the room in which his spiritual sister Sivalingava was meditating. His anger, though sudden and strong at times, was as short-lived as a

line drawn on a sheet of water. He never knew any jealousy even about the spiritual attainments of anybody. On the contrary, he was actually over-joyed to know the unique experience of supersensuous audition of 'Divine Names' by Sri Gurudev Ranade and even asked him to begin to initiate the seekers. Sri Baba had possessed an unshakable faith and tremendous will-power, which enabled him to face and bear the severe buffets of life to, carry on rigorous *Sādhana*, both moral and spiritual, as well as to render the strenuous selfless service to his *Sadguru* Sri Maharaj. His firm faith and strong will also played dominant role in the complete surrender of his ego and thereby merging his own individuality in that of Sri Maharaj. Likewise, the emotions of Sri Baba were also perfectly purified and ennobled. He entertained unbounded love for his disciples. It was so intense that even at the time of his departure, he could express his great anxiety for the spiritual welfare of his erring disciples. His all-absorbing devotion to Sri Maharaj was simply exemplary. During the lifetime of Sri Maharaj, his word was law to Baba. Never was it transgressed by him. Even after the departure of Sri Maharaj, he always used to consult Sri Maharaj spiritually for the Divine *Nāma* before imparting the same to a seeker. In all humility he used to say: "The *Nāma* belongs to Sri Maharaj. Sri Maharaj is your Guru. I am merely his conveyer."

After the passing away of Sri Baba, Gurudev Ranade has written a circular letter of condolence through Sri Kaka-saheb Karkhanis to all the disciples of Sri Baba, describing Sri Baba's supreme spiritual greatness both in life and death. We are giving here the relevant extract from that letter, as follows:

"... Sri Baba was the greatest asset to us after the passing away of Maharaj in January 1914. Nearly 20 years after the Maharaj's passing away, Sri Baba helped all the disciples of Maharaj by his constant guidance and inspiration. For a considerable period he refrained from imparting initiation

to new seekers. But when he found after these years that it was absolutely necessary for him to carry on the torch of spiritual life, inherited from the Maharaj, he girded up his loins, and conferred spiritual obligation upon numerous people. You will grant that Baba had a greater number of educated disciples than even Maharaj had. There was a great identity of interest and life between Maharaj and Baba, and when Baba was left over to us, it was as if we were seeing and hearing Maharaj. His method of discoursing on the *Dasa-Bodhu* was absolutely similar to that of Maharaj himself. There was also no man after Maharaj who carried on so intently the "*Trikāl Sādhana*," which Maharaj spent a life-time in preaching at the top of his voice. It is very significant as you pointed out in your last letter, that when Sri Ganapatrao Tulpule had been to Bijapur to see him, Baba exclaimed in the midst of number of persons who had assembled round about him, that the only two poles around which a spiritual man's life should revolve are (1) meditation on the one hand and (2) morality on the other. This was the very advice, which was being imparted to all of us by Maharaj himself. It has a peculiar significance as coming from Baba even in his last moments.

Your very realistic description of the way in which he left his body is quite significant to show how a spiritual person like him, who has attained to such uncommon heights, dies in the midst of God-communion. From God he is taken and to God he goes. As with Maharaj so with Baba, their life and death have been sublime illustrations of a perpetual communion You will kindly console all the disciples of Baba with the advice which Sri Baba himself imparted to us 20 years ago, that even a Guru may seem to have departed, he still remains at the back of all his disciples to protect them and to further their spiritual endeavours.....".

Such was the unique example of an exalted personality left behind him by Sri Baba for his disciples to emulate.

Practical Philosophy

(M. S. Deshpande & K. D. Sangoram)

Prelude :

Let us now ascertain a few salient features of Sri Baba's Practical Philosophy - his practical, ethical and spiritual teaching. Sri Baba had inherited the spiritual tradition of Sri Sankar, Sri Jñāneśvara, Sri Nimbargi Maharaj and Sri Bhausahab Maharaj. Hence his teaching had been naturally based upon their metaphysics, ethics and mysticism. His ideas about God, Soul, and World, about the importance of ethical and spiritual life, about *Sadguru*, *Nāma* and meditation, as well as about Self-surrender, Spiritual Experience and Liberation, were almost similar to those of the great Saints, both ancient and modern. Only he had his own way of expressing them, due to the peculiar environment in which he lived and moved.

Practical Teaching:

Sri Baba's teaching, like that of his Master, was more

practical than theoretical. He was not so much concerned with the theoretical investigation and elucidation of why, when and how, the inanimate and animate creation came into existence. He was specially interested in the liberation of human beings, from the meshes of flesh - from delusive attraction of the worldly sensual pleasures. So he tried to bring home to them the supreme value of spiritual life and the realisation of God's vision and bliss. Moreover, his teaching was mainly based on his personal experience, both ethical and spiritual-both as a seeker as well as a Saint. He practised what he preached; he realised what he released for the benefit and guidance of his disciples. Thus his teaching had the firm backing of actual experience. Like Swami Ramdas "he expressed what he experienced" (*Ādhi kele, maga sāṅgitale*) आधी केलें, मग सांगितलें.

Metaphysics-Intellectual Discipline :

Once a disciple asked Sri Baba : "What is your philosophy-Dualism (*dvaita*) or Monism (*advaita*)?" Baba replied : "Ours is neither mere Dualism nor mere Monism. It is Dualistic Monism. (*dvitamaya advaita*). We believe in One Spiritual Reality—One God. He has two attributes—*Nāma* or Primeval Sound and *Rūpa* or Primeval Light. *Nāma* is *Rūpa* and *Rūpa* is *Nāma*. There is no difference between them. As stated by a modern Saint, *Nāma* is luminous Sound and *Rūpa* is sonorous Light. *Nāma* has many letters while *Rūpa* has several forms. Underlying these various letters and forms, we realise One *Nāma* and One *Rūpa*. And finally we realise that both *Nāma* and *Rūpa* are attributes of One Reality—One God. Thus we begin with Dualism and end in Monism." Such is the essence of his reply.

Sri Baba, like all other realised Saints, believed and maintained that there is One Supreme Spirit called the Absolute or *Parabrahman*. It is *Sat—Cit—Ānand* or Existence, Knowledge, Power and Bliss. This Infinite Spirit is primarily responsible for the creation, preservation and destruction of

the world of names and forms, that is full of animate and inanimate bodies and objects. This Spirit is present in the different bodies as individual Souls or *Jīvas* or *Jīvātman*s and in the universe as Universal Spirit or *Śiva* or *paramātman*. There is thus an identity between *Jīvātman* and *Paramātman*. The *Jīva* is the drop in the ocean of the Spirit or a spark of the Spiritual Fire.

This identity between the Soul and the Spirit has been expressed by Sri Baba in his own fashion: "*Āta—dehāta-mayā dharan basalāya mhanūna to (ātmā) jīvātmā jhālāya* (आत, देहात माया धरून बसलाय म्हणून तो जीवात्मा झालाय.) As he (*Ātman*) has resided in the body by being attracted by it, he has become *Jīvātmā*-individual Soul. *Tōca parat bahera ālā mhanaje paramātmā hoto*. (तोच परत बाहेर आला म्हणजे परमात्मा होतो.) —And if he comes out of the body (and mixes with the universe) he becomes *Paramātmā* or Universal Spirit.

About the nature of the world Sri Baba has suggestively stated in another context, in this way: While explaining the meaning of (*Pāramārthika*) *Anubhava*, he said: "*śṛṣṭige prati śṛṣṭi āgabeku, adu anubhava*" (सृष्टीಗೆ ಪ್ರತಿ ಸृष्टಿ ಆಗಬೇಕು, ಅದು ಅನುಭವ.) If we experience a Spiritual World exactly similar to this material world, that experience is called *Anubhava*. But this material world is a faint replica of the spiritual world. That is the Original, this is a copy; that is the substance, this is a shadow; that is eternal, this is evanescent".

It is generally believed that this world is an outcome of the *Māyā* of the Spirit or Lord. What is the nature of *Māyā*? To Sri Baba the word *Māyā* conveyed two conceptions: 1) *Māyā* is the ignorant attraction and attachment of the Soul for the body as well as its attachment, love and desire for worldly objects and the pleasure derived from them, ii) *Māyā* also is the Supreme Mysterious Power of the Lord, of creation, preservation and destruction of the world. While *Māyā* controls and rules the Souls, the Lord controls and rules *Māyā*. The

first *Jiva-māyā* is the outcome of the original ignorance and delusion, while the second *Hari-māyā* is that of the original awareness and power.

The soul under the influence of ignorance and delusion identifies itself with the body, forgets its original nature of Bliss. It is enamoured of worldly pleasure, experiences the pleasure and pain of the body and allows itself to be whirled on the wheel of life and death. Sri Baba tries to awaken such souls from the life of flesh to the life of spirit.

His Exhortation:

But how did he try to accomplish this task? Sri Baba once told a disciple: "Look here. We are mainly concerned with two types of persons : (i) Those who believe in God, want to realise Him and are prepared to perform the required experiment for it, and (ii) those who do not believe in God but are eager to know whether He exists or not and are ready to perform the requisite experiment for it. We have nothing to do with others."

Sri Baba, therefore, in his discourse always tried to exhort such aspirants almost in these words: "Please remember that human life is very valuable. You should not waste this precious gift in vain pursuit of the mirage of sensual pleasure which appears to be nectar at the start but proves to be a veritable poison in the end. Hence you should try to seek and realise the Lord and His eternal Bliss. For this alone has this blessed human life been granted to you by the Lord. So instead of falling an easy prey to the destructive allurements of the worldly grandeur and pleasure, like a moth attracted by the brilliance of a flame, you should try to practise moral and spiritual discipline enjoined by a *Sadguru* and enjoy the eternal spiritual Beatitude." Finally Sri Baba used to advise: "Just realise that you are not bodies, but are spirits. That's all. You would then have fulfilled the purpose of your life." (*Mi*

dēha nare, ātmā āhe, evadhe karūn ghṛyā mhanaje jhāle.
(मी देह नव्हे, आत्मा आहे, एवढे करुन घ्या म्हणजे झाले).

Ethics or Moral Discipline:

Now what was the nature of Sri Baba's moral discipline? What were the cardinal virtues he enjoined? Sri Baba advocated first of all, the twin virtues of detachment from others' wealth and women, that are regarded as the minimum qualification of an aspirant in his *Sampradāya*. Every fresh aspirant was strictly required by Baba to take a solemn vow, not to touch others' wealth and women. This vow virtually used to bring about the control of *Kāma* as it includes the passionate desire both for lust and lucre. This *Kāma* happens to be the spring of all other vices. Hence the control of this arch enemy, would automatically lead to the control of other vices. At the same time, Sri Baba advised his disciples to avoid lethargy, worry and fear. Even though they are not considered as positive vices, still as they very often hinder our progress in *Sādhana*, a seeker is advised to be free from them.

Sri Baba did not consider the presence of evil thoughts as sinful, but regarded evil acts alone as sinful. The fickle mind is, he told, like a fly. Just as a fly sits on a flower and filth alike, the mind entertains both pure and impure thoughts. So a seeker should not unnecessarily be perturbed by its vagrant wanderings. He should, however, take particular care to see that his body does not follow it and commit sin.

Sri Baba also advised his disciples to cultivate the triple virtues of Compassion (*dayā*), Forgiveness (*kṣamā*) and Equanimity — contentment (*sānti*). They should ever be filled with pity for the afflicted, with forgiveness for the sinners and try to preserve their balance of mind through contentment. Finally, the seekers were asked to develop devotion to God. It is this God-devotion that is the crown of all virtues. There is a reciprocal causation and development

between God-devotion and other virtues. They help each other in their development. All other virtues either spring from or culminate in Devotion.

When asked about the superiority of Effort (*prayatna*) and Fate (*prārabdha*), Sri Baba answered: "Neither Effort nor Fate is superior. It is God who is superior to both." When Sri Gurudev came to know this reply, he immensely appreciated it.

Mysticism or Spiritual Discipline:

i) **Sadguru:** The spiritual *Sādhana* really begins from the proper initiation by a *Sadguru*. Now, who is a genuine *Sadguru*? According to Sri Baba, a *Sadguru* is one who has realised his identity with the *Ātman* - Lord - and who has heard the Divine *Nāma* (sound) and visualised the Divine *Rūpa* (Light) in his superconscious state, at the time of meditation. Such a realised *Sadguru* alone is capable of granting the Divine *Nāma* to his disciple. It is such *Nāma*, received from such a *Sadguru*, that can enable a seeker to gain spiritual experience through one-pointed meditation. Such is the spiritual teaching of Baba in this respect.

Sri Baba like other saints, maintained that a *Sadguru* should be regarded as God. He himself regarded his *Sadguru* as God and advised his disciples also to do so. His faith and regard for his Master, however, were not an outcome of mere intellectual conviction but were founded on the firm bed-rock of his actual experience. Like the All-merciful Lord, His *Sadguru* had protected him in difficulties, looked after his maintenance (*yoga kṣēma*), guided him properly in his spiritual *Sādhana* and granted him splendid spiritual experiences and Bliss. How then can he think otherwise? He thus entertained a living faith in the God-hood of his *Sadguru* and tried to impart the same faith to his disciples.

Whenever any disciple complained about the lack of progress in his spiritual experiences, Sri Babu used to remark: "I regard *Sri Muhāraj* as God. I enjoy spiritual experiences. You don't regard your *Sadguru* as God, so you are not blessed with good spiritual experiences. Try to regard him as God and then you will begin to have them."

ii) **Nāma:** *Nāma* Divine is the centre of spiritual discipline in this *Sampradāya*. Meditation on Divine *Nāma* is the main *Sādhana* - nay it is the only *Sādhana* regarded in it as capable of granting spiritual experiences or the vision and Bliss Divine. *Nāma*, according to Sri Baba, is the essence of Divinity. "*Nāma, Nāma, Nāmu Viṭhobā Nāma tujhē sara.*" - "*Nāma* is Thy essence, my Lord; *Nāma* is Thy essence." Sri Baba used to repeat this line of Śrī Tukaram very often. *Nāma* is, as we have seen before, the luminous Sound of the Divine revealed to the intuitive ear and eye of a *Sadguru*. It is called *Akṣara* - *brahṇa* - Divinity in the form of Letters or Sounds, by Sri Baba. It does not signify any particular deity. It is a Divine Seed-*Sabija Nāma* - which, if watered by soulful meditation, is capable of supplying a harvest of spiritual experiences. Hence like Sri Maharaj, Sri Baba also used to advise his disciples "never to give up *Nāma* even though the heavens crash down upon their heads or the earth cleaves in twain beneath their feet."

Nāma, according to Baba, is both a means as well as an end. As discipline it grants spiritual experiences. And as an end it grants Divine Bliss.

iii) **Meditation:** Meditation or *Nema* as it is called in this *Sampradāya*. (संप्रदाय) is of two types: (i) Rigorous or *Kattāca Nema* and (ii) Ordinary or *Sādhā Nema* (साधा नेम). i) Rigorous meditation consists in sitting in a quiet place, in a steady erect posture with the gaze fixed either on the tip or top of the nose, mentally repeating the *Nāma* along with incoming

and outgoing breath, with perfect devotion and concentration. Such a *Nema* should be regularly carried on, thrice a day, at least for one hour each time. ii) Ordinary meditation consists in simple remembrance of *Nāma* at all other times, even while walking and talking, eating and drinking etc, Sri Baba called this Meditation *Nirguna Bhakti*, devotion without attributes as he considered the *Nāma* as *Nirguna*.

Along with meditation Sri Baba advised his disciples to read regularly a fixed portion of *Pothi* or Sacred Books like *Dāsabōdha* and *Manōbōdha* of Sri Ramadas, thrice every day and perform *Bhajan* and *Arati*-sing the glory of the Lord and wave light before the Photograph of Sri Maharaj, with perfect devotion. Baba used to call this discipline *Saguna Bhakti* or Devotion with attribute. *Sagunācēni ādhāre nirguna pāvijē nirdhāre.* (सगुणाचेनि आघारें निर्गुण पाविजे निघारि). With the help and support of *Saguna Bhakti*, Baba used to say, you should carry on *Nirguna Bhakti* and realise the Lord who is also *Nirguna*.

Finally Baba emphasised the importance of *Satsang*-good company, in spiritual life. He always advised all to carry on their *Sādhana* in the holy company of the *Sādhakās*. Such a *Sādhana* becomes doubly effective.

Sri Baba was once asked : " How long is this *Sādhana* to be continued ? " He peremptorily replied : " Till the end of life. The *Ātman* is ever free. He does not require any *Sādhana*, which is meant for the body. Hence it should be performed till the body lasts. "

Whenever the *Sādhakās* complained about the disturbance caused by extraneous thoughts at the time of meditation, Sri Baba used to tell them : " These idle thoughts are the products of your stray desires. Reduce the desires and the thoughts would be automatically reduced. Thoughts gain

power through your active support to them. Make it a point not to support them. Be mere witnesses to their wanderings, go on with your meditation and they will vanish after some time. Secondly, repeat the *Nāma* rapidly one after another without leaving any interval between two *Nāmas*. Then there would be no chance for the thoughts to intervene. If you thus meditate on *Nāma* which is *Nirvikalpa* - without attributes, you will not be assailed by idle fancies. As *Swāmi Rāmdās* has put it : *Nirvikalpāsi kalpitā kalapanā mōde tatvatā.* (निर्विकल्पासी कल्पिता कल्पना मोडे तत्त्वता) But it must be remembered that it is only the grace or realisation of the Lord that could completely free you from desires both good as well as evil.

In this way you should try to make your meditation one-pointed and soulful. Such constant meditation carried on for a long period, would gradually grant you higher and higher spiritual experiences, on the one hand, and develop supreme devotion (*Bhāva*) and self-surrender (*Śaranāgamana*) on the other. Both would in the long run culminate in the realisation and enjoyment of the Vision, Bliss and Peace, Divine. Such is the nature of the spiritual discipline that is advocated by Sri Baba.

Spiritual Experiences

We have seen before how Sri Baba enjoyed splendid spiritual experiences. Here we would point out some of the solutions offered by Baba to problems posed to him about this subject. On one occasion, Baba was asked : " Can God be realised during the present time, as He had been realised by the ancient Seers ? " " Why not ? " replied Baba, " God can be realised here and now. Modern Saints have realised Him exactly as the ancient Seers had done. " On another occasion, one of his spiritual brothers asked : " Has anybody realised God completely ? " " No " was his reply. " God is Infinite. So, He cannot be realised completely. One can eat a seer of sugar; another can eat a maund. Can anybody eat the whole quantity

of sugar in the world? Hence we must remain satisfied with what little experience we are blessed with, by the Lord, ever calmly aspiring for more”.

Sri Baba once remarked “ *Bindu tethe sindhu* ” (बिंदु तेथें सिंधु) “Where there is a drop, there is ocean.” At this, a disciple asked: “If that be so, why do we not experience joy at the vision of a drop?” Sri Baba replied: “The above statement carries a double meaning and significance. Firstly it signifies that a drop can expand and finally merge in the ocean—become one with the ocean. Secondly, there is a qualitative identity between a drop and the ocean, though there is quantitative difference between them. A pinch of sugar is as sweet as a maund of sugar. On account of the difference in quantity there is difference in the extent of Joy. That’s all.”

The famous *Upaniṣadic* Aphorism “*Tat - twam - asi*” ‘That thou art’ - has been interpreted by Sri Baba in his own peculiar way which is based on his own experience. He used to say: “‘*That*’ means the *Vastu* - the spiritual experience. The *Vastu* indicates the nature of your progress in spiritual life, That is the meaning of *Tat-twam-asi*.” In the same way, he maintained that the Aphorism “*Aham Brahmāsmi*” - “I am *Brahma*” does not mean that the body is *Brahma*. It means that the *Vastu*, experienced by the *Sādhaka*, alone partakes the nature of *Brahman*. His meaning of “*So’ham*” — I am He” was also similar. When once Sri Baba was asked whether the repetition of the words “*So’ham*” would lead to God-realisation, he replied: “*So’ham* is the description of a high spiritual experience. It is not a *Mantra* to be contemplated upon. How can the repetition of a description of an experience lead one to actual experience? The experience can only be attained by meditation on *Nāmā Divine*.”

Sri Baba once told his disciple that Spiritual Beauty is infinitely superior to physical beauty. Before it the physical

beauty pales into insignificance. There cannot be any comparison between the two. Those blessed souls who could experience and enjoy Spiritual Beauty will never be allured by physical beauty. It will never be able to arouse sensual passion in them.

On another occasion, a disciple asked him: “You have told us that when you are completely absorbed in the enjoyment of Bliss Divine, there is no consciousness of any Guru, disciple or anything else. There is Bliss and Bliss alone. Why then are your eyes wet with tears when you begin to speak about the greatness of Sri Maharaj?” “My tears are,” replied Baba, “the outcome of my love and gratefulness about Sri Maharaj. But while enjoying the Bliss of Self-realisation, there is really no consciousness of anything else except Bliss.” Once again Sri Baba was asked whether Joy is prior to Peace or Peace is prior to Joy. Baba answered: “Joy is experienced first. Then follows Peace. Joy is unsteady while Peace is eternal. When the flood of Joy subsides, eternal Peace continues to remain. But this Peace cannot be experienced without the prior experience of Joy. Peace is the apex of Joy.”

Once there was a discussion about the miracles performed by the Saints. Sri Baba explained: “As a *Sādhaka* advances in his spiritual *Sādhana* the so-called *Siddhis* or occult powers rush to him. They pursue him and try to allure him. If he falls a prey to their temptation and tries to use them, they would prove a great obstacle in his spiritual advancement by flattering his egoism. Hence a *Sādhaka* is strictly forbidden to perform miracles through their use. He should, therefore, always keep them at an arm’s length. In the case of Saints, it is God, who at times performs miracles for them. They never try to perform them. Neither are they conscious of them when they are performed by God for spreading His devotion among the people, through them.”

Liberation or *Mukti*, according to Sri Baba, consists in

the realisation and enjoyment of the Bliss and Peace Divine, as this alone will liberate a seeker completely from the attachment to worldly pleasure by annihilating all his desires. Like Sri Maharaj, Sri Baba also regarded Liberation during the present life (*jīvanmukti*) as the only cash (*Rokadi*) Liberation. He used to call Liberation after death (*Videhamukti*) as credit (*Udhāra*) Liberation. *Jīvanmukti* alone is real Mukti.

Saint's Blessing to Society :

Very often doubts have been expressed regarding the utility of Saints to society, even though lives of great Saints have demonstrated that they have come down to the world, only for the betterment and benefaction of society in their own way. "A Saint who is not of supreme service to society," declared Sri Gurudev Dr. Ranade, "is not a Saint at all" Sri Baba could not be an exception to this rule.

He was once asked by a disciple as to why a Saint who has renounced all desires, wishes to spread devotion among the people. Sri Baba replied: "All Saints entertain an intense feeling of compassion in their hearts, for afflicted humanity. They melt with pity at the sight of the misery of the people born out of their ignorant attachment for bodily pleasure. Hence they are naturally impelled to rescue them from misery by advising them to follow the path of God-devotion and realise His Vision and Bliss."

Sri Baba used to tell us: "*Nāvu illiyavaralla, aliyavaru*" (ನಾವು ಇಲ್ಲಿಯವರಲ್ಲ ; ಅಲ್ಲಿಯವರು) "We don't belong to this world; we belong to the spiritual world." "*Devaru hogu anda. bandivi*" (ದೇವರು ಹೋಗು ಅಂದಾ ಬಂದೆವಿ). "God told us to go; so we have come here." He also told one of his spiritual brothers: "The Lord has entrusted us with the mission of spreading His devotion among the people. Hence we try to discharge this sacred duty to the best of our ability even at

the cost of our bodily comfort and convenience." This shows that Saints work for the spiritual welfare of humanity out of Infinite compassion for the people and also due to the command of the Lord.

During the last few years of his life, Sri Baba very often used to sing the following *Abhanga* of Sri Tukaram; and explain it: "*Āmhi vaikunthavāsi ālo yāci kārṇāsi*" (आम्ही वैकुण्ठासी आलो याचि कारणासी) "We are the residents of the Kingdom of God. We have come here to demonstrate by our deeds and words, the truth of the Spiritual Message of the ancient Seers. Their Pathway to God has been fully covered with brambles and dust and has become invisible. People in their blind ignorance have been, hence, aimlessly wandering in the woods. We want to clear the Pathway and show it to them. We would sound the drum of God-devotion, says Tukaram, and strike terror in the heart of the God of Death. Come on, ye Devotees of the Lord! Blissfully proclaim from the house-tops the gracious glory of the Lord." Sri Baba, like Sri Tukaram, unfurled the flag of Devotion and gathered thousands of devotees under its benign influence.

Here is Sri Baba's Eternal Message in a nutshell, as pointed out by his Marathi Poet-biographer rendered freely into English:

Remember the Name with constant devotion
Observe without fail your moral discipline.
Keep ever the company of the holy and the good,
And realise full well the Bliss of the Lord!

Constant meditation on the *Nāma* with firm faith, will automatically remove all the dangers through the grace of the Master. This is the assurance of our Master (26-7-1914).

(2) God's Will alone Prevails.

None can counter the Will of the Lord. God alone can grant happiness after sorrow. (14-1-1917)

Profit and loss, birth and death, are both under the control of the Lord. We are simply to perform our duty of meditating on Him (21-10-1918). Please remember that everything takes place according to the wish of the Lord. Hence you should rest satisfied in whatever position He is pleased to place you. (12-11-1918)

You should entrust everything to the care of the Master and be ever engaged in meditation. "Whenever a devotee is engulfed in dire difficulty, he should try to remember the Lord". The Gita has assured us that "all sorrow vanishes when we receive His grace." (17-3-1920)

(3) As is our Devotion, so is His Grace.

Our capacity is meant for the service of our Master. We should render as much service as our Master would enable us to do. We may render more service to him in case he grants us the requisite facility and strength.

The Lord grants us as much as our devotion deserves. But then, our devotion must be thoroughly sincere-hearted. This is what my Master used to tell me, while he had assumed the body. Baba knows only this much. Realised Saints have stated about such a devotion, as prayed for, by Namadev in his following *Abhanga*.

Live or fall my body frail,

Light for Life.

(A few extracts from the letters of Sri Amburao Maharaj given in his Marathi biography by Sri R. P. Kulkarni. Free English rendering by Sri M. S. Deshpande.)

(1) Primary Duty of a Devotee.

The Primary Duty of a Devotee is constant meditation on the Lord (His Name). The Lord ever protects His devotees. There is no doubt about it. When the sky is overcast with clouds, it appears turbid. But in reality, it is as clear as before. Similarly, a *Sādhaka* forgets to meditate on the Name Divine for some time, on account of the dominance of body-consciousness. And this forgetfulness brings about delusion to his mind. He thereby becomes greatly worried. But if he makes a firm resolve to meditate on Him who has granted him life, and if he feels convinced that whatever is done by God, is done for his good, under all circumstances, and steadily continues to meditate on Him, he would be blessed with profuse bliss by the Lord. We are assured by the Saints that God saves even the fallen. (20-6-1914)

My love for Thee shall never fail.
Never shall I leave Thy Holy feet,
I swear by Thee my benign Lord great !
Thy Name Divine on my lips shall rest
Eternal love shall reside in the breast.
This is, my Lord ! Nāmā's prayer
Let my *Sādhana* continue for ever !

You are already aware of the words of the Wise that God or *Sadguru* alone is both the doer as well as the prompter.

(4) Be True to Yourself.

My great *Sadguru* has personally told me two principles (i) Everyone has his own position; (ii) We must behave with our mind as the witness. These two principles are the real guides for our salvation. Even the casual words of our Master carry wholesome advice. Constant 'awareness is Ultimate Reality, while non-awareness is worldly delusion.' If we keep this maxim in mind always, and behave accordingly we would automatically know everything. We would then feel greater and greater joy. (2-3-1915)

Once we adopt [the Path of Devotion, we should never swerve from it. It would bring us discredit. We should bear the strokes of the chisel. Then alone can we attain Godhood. We should ever turn a deaf ear to all public censure.

You have informed in your letter that at the time of meditation, you feel sleepy, your mind strays away from *Nāma*, and that you feel pain in your waist. I am writing this to you as prompted by Maharaj. Please try to ascertain at that time, whether you are remembering the *Nāma* or have forgotten it. You will then come to know that sleep overpowers you when you are not aware of *Nāma*. Hence to avoid sleep, try to remember it steadily. You have stated that due to pain in the

waist you cannot sit for meditation for a long time. This is the result of the dominance of your body-consciousness which is always intent upon avoiding meditation. Once your mind is concentrated on the *Nāma*, the body-consciousness would vanish completely. Even now, your body itself does not observe proper restrictions and regulations. Hence it proves to be a hindrance to your meditation.

Therefore, while rising and sitting, eating and drinking, in joy and work, don't forget *Nāma* and don't fail to fix the inner gaze. You should ever remember *Nāma*, in childhood, youth and oldage as well as at the time of death. Such is the advice of the Master. Mind always tries to shirk its own responsibility by throwing the blame on the body.

As Sri Tukaram has stated in his following *Abhang*, *Anant* (infinite) are the ripples of *Buddhi* (intellect). They change their colours every moment. If we try to hold any one of them, It will prove to be a hindrance to us.

Here *Anant* ★ means eternal *Ātman* who has no end or the *Vastu*-spiritual form. *Buddhi* means the *Nāma* imparted by the *Sadguru*. While meditating on it, various ripples of thought arise in the mind. If we are attached to them and forget *Nāma*, they prove to be obstacles in our meditation. Hence whenever we are assailed by them, we should not give up meditation. We should ever preserve this spiritual treasure safe in our heart. We should never forget *Nāma* in all the four states of consciousness viz. waking, dream, deep-sleep and the super-conscious. I have been merely conveying you what I have heard from my *Sadguru*.

★ This is the peculiar interpretation of Sri Baba always directed to the *Sadhana* and *Saksatkara*.

(5) Absolute Self-surrender.

Ere-long, I have never entertained the idea that I can do anything. I believe that things take their course as directed by the omnipotent *Sadguru*. My repeated prayer to my *Sadguru* is that I should feel inclined to act according to his advice ... I followed Sri Maharaj upto Jigajinni. And after he proceeded to Umadi, I returned to Inchagiri. About ten days have elapsed since then. Still I strongly feel that I am always in the company of Maharaj-not only in wakefulness but also in dream and sleep. It is only when I specially try to remember that Maharaj has gone to Umadi, that I become aware of it. I have always submitted to you at Bijapur that I have completely surrendered my all to you. From that time I have really developed a firm conviction that Sri Maharaj always takes care of me, looks after my welfare. I am ever ready to execute your behests. All my words and deeds are really the outcome of your inner guidance. There is practically nothing which I can claim as my own. I have written this also as is prompted by you.

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