

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE HEIRS OF CHANDRABHAN SETH

Saipatham interviewed Sri Jayachand Seth and Sri Surender Seth – grandson and great grandson respectively of Chandrabhan Seth. The interview was held in Marathi and English, and its text is given below.

Q: We have come from Saipatham magazine to visit your house, which was blessed by the feet of Sri Sai Baba and to gather information about Baba. Could you please tell us the details of your experiences with Baba?

JS (Jayachand Saand): We are very happy that you have come. I will tell you what details I can remember of those days. We will be glad if further details of Baba, which are not in Sri Sai Satcharitra, see the light of the day and are published by you.

Q: It is mentioned in Sri Sai Satcharitra that Baba never went out of Shirdi except to go to Neemgaon and Rahata. It is also mentioned that he would only visit the house of Sri Dengle in Neemgaon and the house of Sri Kushalchand in Rahata. Is it true that he came only to this house in Rahata?

JS: Yes, it is true. We have not made any changes to this house since those days except to have the electrical wiring done as well as painting it.

Q: Could you tell us approximately how many times Baba had come to this house?

JS: Baba would come here quite often until he entered samadhi. (Woh hamesha ate the - he came very frequently.) If Kushalchand did not go to Shirdi for a week, he would say, "Why has Kushalchand not come? Tatya, get the horse-cart ready. I must go and see him." Tatya would get the cart ready and Baba would come in that to Rahata. Sometimes he would not even wait for the cart but would come walking to see him. Our gardens extended to the borders of the village in those days. Our watchman would come running and inform us that Baba was soon arriving. Our grandfather and others would hurry to the outskirts of the village with musical accompaniments and would respectfully and ceremoniously welcome Baba to our house.

Q: Baba never went to anyone's house, but he came to yours and indeed has shown great rinanubandha (the bond of indebtedness extending over many lives) between Baba and you. What do you say?

JS: What you say is true. There must have been a great rinanubandha between us. I can state with the fullest confidence that the rinanubandha between us is still continuing. But we can never say how that rinanubandha happened or why it happened. My father, Amolokchand Saand used to say that an aulia (Moslem saint) called Jawahar Ali stayed in Wadia Park in our estate at Ahmednagar. Baba came with him to Ahmednagar and thence to Rahata. Baba left for Shirdi after that.

Q: So you feel that Baba had first come to Ahmednagar and then to Rahata and finally to Shirdi?

JS: I am just conveying what my father used to say. I do not know how true that is. My father said many times that my cousin Daulatram saw Baba staying with Jawahar Ali in Ahmednagar.

Q: We heard that there is a photograph of Jawahar Ali in Rahatekar wada, your house at Ahmednagar?

JS: Yes. There was a spinning mill there. Now it is no longer under us. We sold the mill several years ago, but we kept the photograph of Jawahar Ali with us. Later a devotee of Sri Sai Baba took it assuring us that he would return it after having a copy made. Unfortunately, he has not returned it. We are trying to trace the photograph and get it back.

Q: Sri Sai Sharanananda has written in his autobiography that he, along with Baba, Bapusaheb Jog and Mrs. Jog, once came to your house?

JS: Yes. In those days many of Baba's devotees would accompany him when he came to our house. The intimacy Baba had with Kushalchand was so great that Baba once said, "Kushal, arrange a place for me to stay here. I will settle down here with you." Kushalchand very happily agreed then and there to arrange a place for Baba to stay. But Baba stayed on in Shirdi.

Q: Sri Sai Sharanananda wrote that once when Baba, Dixit and Jog came to your house, Baba's main purpose in coming was to ask for a loan for a devotee called Narvekar. This shows that it was a practice of Baba to take money on loan from your grandfather. Is this true? Was your grandfather giving loans of cash to Baba?

JS: I do not know of Narvekar's loan, but it may have been true. Once Baba called upon Kushalchand to lend Rs. 500 to Kakasaheb Dixit, and my grandfather obeyed him and gave the amount. The grand-daughter of Kakasaheb Dixit, who now lives in Juhu near Mumbai, told us this, but the elders of our family told us that Baba never asked for anything for himself. What need did he have for anything? Whenever he came to our house, the ladies of the family used to beg Baba to eat something. After a great deal of importuning the obdurate Baba would finally relent and say, "Alright mother, give me a little milk and bread." Even then, he would barely nibble at it. Our house had good things to eat in abundance, but he never asked for anything more than milk and bread, and that too, only a little.

Q: When Baba came to your house did he enter the house or did he remain sitting on the verandah?

JS: He would enter the house. He used to come in by that door (Sri Jayachand Seth indicated the main door of the house to the Saipatham team.)

Q: Could you tell us more about the experiences of your family with Baba?

JS: There are innumerable experiences. How many experiences can I tell you of Baba? Our grandfather, Chandrabhan Seth married three times and had many children but all of them died. My father was the 21st child. Baba came here as soon as he knew that Chandrabhan Seth had had a son. He held my father in his arms and said, "This child is my prasad to you." (Prasad: food offered to the deity, a portion of which may be returned to the devotee as a sign of blessing). The child grew up hale and hearty without any illness whatsoever. Our family has survived only by the grace of Baba; he showers us with his grace even to this day. Once he told Kushalchand, "Look Kushal, people will worship my bones after I am gone." That prophecy has been fulfilled.

SS (Surendar Saand): In those days when Baba used to come to our house, our orchards extended up to the border of our village. After a few years, as the wells ran dry, the orchards withered and by 1990 there was no orchard at all. We tried to have an artesian well drilled and started work in the morning but did not find water till the evening. I went to Baba's Samadhi Mandir in the evening and had Darshan. I prayed to Baba to let there be water in the artesian well and to let the fields and orchards be as green as they were in his time. Within five minutes we got water in the well and by the grace of Baba all the orchards are green again.

Q: Baba was taking dakshina from all. Did he take dakshina (ceremonial offering of cash or kind given to saints and god.) from your grandfather too?

JS: We do not know what Kushalchand gave when he went to Shirdi to visit Baba. But when Baba came here we would give him something as we should not send a saint away empty-handed from our house. Kushalchand would help any devotee if Baba asked him to. Our elders, however, told us that Baba never took anything for himself.

Q: What arrangements did you make for Baba when he came here? Were you informed in advance that Baba was coming? Did the whole village come here to have darshan of Baba?

JS: As I said, our orchards extended to the borders of the village. We had a worker in the orchards called Lakshman or Laksha, and the moment he saw Baba he would come running and inform us that Baba was on his way. Kushalchand would immediately go along with music and receive Baba and ceremoniously escort him to our house, along with the devotees who usually accompanied Baba. He never set foot in any other house but ours in Rahata, so the other villagers had a lot of respect for us and would never dare to venture into our house. Baba would spend some time with the devotees who accompanied him and with the members of our family and return to Shirdi. This man called Laksha, who had served Baba when he came to our house, later, became a holy man called Lakshmi Baba and settled in Valsad area.

Q: It is written in Sai Satcharitra that when Baba entered Mahasamadhi, Kushalchand was amongst those who insisted that Baba's body be interred in the Muslim graveyard. Is it true?

JS: We do not know about that incident. After Baba entered Mahasamadhi, Upasani Baba, who was staying in our orchard in those days, conducted a Nama Saptaha in our orchard, chanting the name of God for seven days. Daulatram, my brother, did all the arrangements for the Nama Saptaha. (Exactly a month after Baba entered Mahasamadhi, on 15 November 1918, Kushalchand passed away.)

http://www.indiadvine.org/audarya/ammachi/238571-interview-heirs-chandrabhan-seth.html_