

**AN EXCERPT FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY HON. VASUDEV SITARAM RATANJANKAR,
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“I first came to know of Sai and His *Leelas* from Kushabhau (Vedshastra Sampanna Krishnanathbuva Mirajgaonkar Joshi) in 1908. Many people invited him for *Puja* and honored him. This routine went on for many days in the village. Once there was a *Puja* at Vedshastra Sampanna Sitarambhatji Ghate’s house. Since he was my maternal uncle, I happened to be present at the *Puja*. Listening to the stories of Sai, it occurred to me that Sai (i.e. his devotee) should visit my house to perform a *Puja*. Just then Maharaj said, “I am coming to your house tomorrow”. Thinking about the *Puja* arrangements, I went home happily and informed everyone about it.

At dawn, my mother Gangabai dreamt of a sage garbed in saffron clothing coming straight into our house. My mother offered him a place to sit, but he stood in that place and as my mother touched his feet with her head, she woke up. She told everyone about her dream, but no one paid much attention to it.

That very day I went for the *Puja* again at my uncle’s house. While giving *Tirtha Prasad*, Maharaj gave me Sai’s photo which was kept in the *Puja* and told me to worship it every day. When I came home with the photo, my family members realized the significance of my mother’s dream. Later I invited Maharaj (Shri Krishnanath Maharaj) for lunch and requested him to perform the *Puja*. This is how I came to know of Sai.

After listening to people’s experiences of Sai time and again, I felt a desire to take Sai’s *Darshan* and be blessed. However this could happen only 2-3 years later, in 1912. I was to go to Mumbai to see the arrival of the King of the British Empire, but one fine morning Shri Shivdas Dhate gave me a ticket to Shirdi. I took it as an invitation from Baba, cancelled my Mumbai visit and left for Shirdi the very same evening. There I experienced a lot of miracles and signs. Since I felt like writing some poems on Sai I also wrote a ‘*Padyamala*’.

An example of the many miracles is that of Late Smt. Malanbai, daughter of Late Shri Damodar Ranganath Joshi Degaonkar and also my maternal cousin. She was suffering from fever for a long time which ultimately turned to be TB. Many doctors and medicines were tried but to no avail. In the end we started giving her Baba’s *Udi* along with the medicines. Fed up of her illness, Malanbai kept saying, “Take me for Baba’s *darshan*. Only then will I be cured.” But she was so weak that she could barely sit. Travelling would have been dangerous. In the end the doctors relented and gave her permission to go, thinking there could be some psychological benefit. She was taken to Shirdi accompanied by 2-3 other people.

As soon as Baba saw her he started hurling abuses and said, "Let her lie on a blanket. Give her only water from the *matka* (clay pot) to drink." She laid there for 7-8 days surviving only on water, but kept on repeating that only Baba would cure her.

7-8 days later, even though it was past Baba's time to get up, he did not. People who had gone for *Kakad Aarti* waited patiently, but kept wondering why Baba was not getting up.

On the other hand Malanbai passed away and some of her relatives started making the funeral arrangements. Her mother and I sat next to Malanbai in grief. Sathe kaka (a devotee) tried to comfort us. Suddenly Malanbai moved, yawned and opened her eyes. She looked quite terrified and looked all around. A wave of happiness spread among the people around her and they listened as she narrated her story. "A black man was taking me with him when I cried for Baba's help. Baba came and beat up the man with his baton ('*Sota*'), saved me from his clutches and took me inside the *Chavdi*." She described the *Chavdi* without ever having been there.

While here in the *Chavdi*, people were discussing why Baba was yet asleep when suddenly Baba woke up pounding his baton ('*Sota*') and ran to the place where the girl was staying (Dixit's Wada). People followed him and met those who were coming to report the girl's miraculous coming to life. Thus Baba proved how he saved his devotees even from death. There are many more miracles but lack of space constrains me."

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