

At the Feet of Sai Baba by Purushotham R. Avasthi

We are pleased to publish a portion of the autobiographical sketch of Late Shri Purushotham Avasthi, an intimate devotee of Sai Baba. Sri Avasthi was a spiritually advanced person and had the benefit of being a devotee of our Master, introduced by Sri M.B. Rege Sahib. Further, the credit of bringing Sri Narasimha Swamiji and Sri Rege Sahib together goes to Sri P.R. Avasthi –

Editor

It was Christmas holidays of 1914. My friend M. B. Rege took me to Shirdi along with him to seek the blessings of Sai Baba. During the journey, I was wondering as to whether I have transgressed the advice of my Guru not to visit another saint. I was indeed in a repentant mood for having agreed to go to Shirdi and was beginning to feel that I have been led astray by the jugglery of the old fakir at Shirdi. I felt that I should overpower his sorcery by utterance of Shri Ram Nam. Rege called me 'Crazy'.

At Shirdi, we met Sai Baba in the Chavdi. My friend Rege went to him and prayed to him to rid of my fit of craziness. Baba looked at me and I was cured of my spell instantly on hearing Baba's melodious and devout tone 'Allah Malik Hai'. I apologized to him mentally to pardon my defects. I put my head at his Lotus feet. He blessed me by gently touching my head. Then onwards every creature that I happened to look on our way began to strike me as Sai Baba. In meeting Sai Baba, my quest for a Sadguru was over and Sai Baba was everything for me.

We went to the residence of Mother Radhakrishna Ayi. She appeared to me like the proto-type of my Guru Shanthi Devi. On seeing me Mother Radhakrishna Ayi narrated a few earlier incidents of my life. I was stunned but still did not accept her as a substitute for my Guru Shanthi Devi but as her sister.

Even as I was thinking on these lines, Mother Radhakrishna Ayi cried aloud 'I am dying' and fell flat on the ground. I ran up to her and putting her head on my lap loudly chanted one after the other five mantras based on the five letters of 'Shiv Panchakshari' which represented the five elements. I implored the deities to revive her in exchange for all the virtues I had acquired in 16 years of my spiritual sadhana. Mother Radhakrishna Ayi opened her eyes and I felt exceedingly grateful to God for this recovery.

I was in Shirdi for four days. Sai Baba passed me through various stages and phases of His miraculous powers and made me realize as to His being an

avatar. This visit proved to be a turning point in my life as it weeded out the unholy thoughts about Him as a 'Muslim' and drove me towards Him to look upon Him not only as my Sadguru but as my God in whose quest I had been so long hankering after.

It was 'Ekadashi' – the last day of my visit. Sai Baba had returned to the mosque from Chavadi after the Kakad Arathi. He sent for my friend M.B. Rege and directed him to take me away. A cart-Tonga was got ready. As we started to go he came out of the mosque to go on for his morning round and we had the good fortune to salute him near the village gate and got his blessings at the time of our departure.

After this visit, I used to go to Shirdi at least twice or thrice a year and on every occasion I was fortunate to get His darshan and blessings. This continued for four years or so without a break.

In November 1917, in the early hours Sai Baba manifested in our residence at Ujjain. I got up from my bed and bowed to Him reverentially. He suddenly disappeared. At that very moment I heard the familiar voice of Abdul Bhai calling me by name from the garden. I opened the door and rushed out to find Abdul Bhai. But I found only a friend of mine plucking flowers who on enquiry told me that no one else had come and called me by name!

I was wondering about the significance of Sai Baba's visit to our house. On the third day of this incident, I received a letter from Sri Waman Rao Patil of Shirdi about the sad demise of Mother Radhakrishna Ayi in the early hours of the very day Sai Baba had visited our residence.

In May 1918, I visited Shirdi along with my sister and niece. They wanted to offer 'Naivedya' of pithala to Sai Baba and were preparing it in the very room that used to be formerly occupied by Mother Radhakrishna Ayi. The fuel was wet and smoke covered the entire room. Unable to bear the smoke, my sister thought of Mother Radhakrishna Ayi to come and help in kindling the fuel. At once they fancied that Mother had come downstairs and helped them in enkindling the wet fuel and then disappeared. While they felt the ethereal presence of the Mother amidst them, reality dawned that Mother had cast off her mortal coil in November 1917 itself. But they were inwardly happy for having her darshan.

Another incident I recall was in October 1918. At Ujjain, ladies in our household had inadvertently washed the husked rice grain twice or thrice and went into the kitchen. Soon they realized the mistake and were at their wit's end as to what is to be done. By chance, I happened to go there and when they told me about this, I casually asked them to prepare 'Sakhar Bath'

as Sai Baba liked it (rice mixed with sugar and fried in ghee and a little quantity of saffron added to it). After we offered 'Naivedya' to Sai Baba and partook 'prasad', we got a letter from Shirdi conveying the saddest news of Sai Baba's 'Mahasamadhi'. The news was like a bolt from the blue and we became benumbed and overtaken with grief.

A friend of mine who was there remarked that on such occasions, sweet rice or Meeta Bath is generally prepared according to Muslim rites and Sai Baba, in His own inimitable manner had received 'Naivedya' through me. What a coincidence.

Sai Baba is blessing us for ever. I am totally incapable of penning them adequately. Beyond the bounds of mind lies all comprehensive intelligence. Beyond the compass of the heart pervades all embracing love infinite. This great cause of all causes the one truth – God, the Beloved of our heart, in us resides. He is the sweetest companion, giver of true solace, peace and joy. Have Him and all your known and unknown Longings are fulfilled.

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