

*"When truth is stranger than fiction"*

- The Upanishads

Yes, I saw Him, The re-incarnation of Baba (Twenty-six years after His Mahasamadhi) - This occurred in March, 1944 at Vizianagaram, A.P, 26 years after Baba attained Maha Samadhi in October, 1918.

*Mukam karothi uachalam Mrutha mujj'wa yatyapi*

- The Upanishads

*Behold, it came to pass that the dumb spoke and the dead came back to life.*

*The Bible*

Yes, there He stood at the gate, with His serene indulgent face and benevolent eyes, clothed in 'Kupni' with the cloth over the head falling loosely over the shoulders, the 'Biksha Patra' held in the right hand with the left folded and resting over the right shoulder exactly as in the portrait facing P112 of the Satcharita (Eng. edn. by Sri N.V. Gunaji). I was stunned with amazement. It was INCREDIBLE.

Only a moment before, in my frenzied despair at the passing away of my first-born son aged 10 years, I had denied him His Divinity and His omnipresence testified again and again by His devotees experiences both before and after His 'Mahasamadhi. I had declared Him to be a false deity and beseeched my wife to throw His portrait on the dung hill. But here He stood to prove the TRUTH OF HIS ETERNAL EXISTENCE.

You see, the medicine I poured into the mouth of my semiconscious son remained there. I shouted to him to swallow it, but the mouth remained open. I became frantic and tried to close it. No, the jaws had become rigid. I checked the pulse. It too had stopped. It was then

that I called out my wife from the kitchen and spoke those blasphemous words. She just sat by the bed, head bent and tears trickling down, as much hurt by my profanity, no doubt, as by the bereavement.

I had come to the end of my tether spiritually; I was not myself for once. Thus I had the brutal impudence to ask my grieving wife whether she had cooked, adding, 'He has anyway gone. I don't want to die, too. I shall go and eat.'

Imagine the father, however forlorn, to be so devoid of all feelings as to put such an inhuman question to the mother just bereaved. There is no limit to which human nature can sink through, thank God; it can also soar to Elysian heights. Here I must say that my wife's faith, unlike mine, has throughout been un-flickering, standing 'four-square to all the winds that blow'. Whenever my mind harks back to that scene, I cannot help wondering how I escaped her righteous indignation for my frenzied outburst. Where else, except in this land hallowed by Sita, Savithri, Damayanthi and Mandodhari, Nalaayini and Renuka Devi, can one meet with such phenomenal forbearance and fortitude?

It is not far-fetched to say that it is for such paragons of virtue that the Sun shines, it rains, and Mother Earth continues to yield her bounty. It has been said that 'the greatness of a man does not consist in never falling but rising every time he falls'. Indeed, it is by the magnetic charm of their devotion that 'homo sapiens' is not completely debased. In her own gentle manner, she said. 'I just finished cooking for the children. Pray, serve yourself once', and lapsed into, what I know now in retrospect to have been, prayer to Baba.

You see, there were four younger children, two of them twins hardly six months old. But my mind and heart had become dry, no thought or feeling for any one, not even Baba!

So I betook myself to the kitchen to *eat!* I sat with a Thali before me and mechanically served myself some rice. Before I could bring myself to eat, while sitting and staring at the rice

vacantly, I became schizophrenic, as it were, one part of me questioning the other, "Look, what are you trying to do? there lies your first-born son dead and you are going to gorge yourself". This shocked me into realizing how perfectly horrid of me it was. I turned to look in the direction of the bed in the front room which was in line with the kitchen. It was then that my eyes beheld the wonderful form of Baba. Was it a mere vision, a figment of my imagination? I shouted to my wife with head still bent, "Kamu, look out and see who has come". Reacting to the frantic urgency in my voice, she looked up and glanced at the gate. At once, as if touched by a live wire, she sprang up; and, as if that was the consummation, she was devoutly praying for she exclaimed "Amma Nayana/ Baba *Vachcheru!*" (Oh! at long last Baba has come!). Actually, neither of us had seen the Satcharita portrait of Baba by then. Our *puja* portrait showed Him sitting crossed. However, in His inscrutable Wisdom, He had led us into buying at a 'mela' a few months earlier, a wood-cut portraying Him in five different poses, including this one, we were able to recognize Him at once.

Now I felt sure it was Him. I was back in my senses. My heart was full of gratitude to Him for coming in the nick of time, and saving the situation. Else, in my forsaken condition, with no thought of Him or for my son, I might have polluted the food before me. In this new found happiness, I reverentially took the *thali* up to Him and put the rice in the lifted 'biksha-patra', He received it with His beatific face and went away. No word was spoken. Indeed, there was no need for any. My heart was too full for it, too. There was 'peace that passed understanding'.

As I stepped into the house, my son opened his eyes and said "Father, I am thirsty. Give me some water."

The humanly impossible had come to pass!

Glory be to Shri Shirdi Sai – Grace be to all

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