

Experience of Vishnu B Pitale

The wondrous Leela of the cure of Harishchandra Pithale's epileptic son is given in Ch.26

of Sai Satcharitra. Harishchandra was blessed by Baba who said ***"Bapu I have given you Rs.2/- earlier, keep these Rs.3/- along with them, and perform their proper puja, regularly. It will benefit you greatly"***.

Harishchandra returned home and tried to solve the mystery of Baba's words, as it was the first trip to Shirdi. His mother narrated how his father had received Rs.2/- from Swamy Samarth, earlier thus solving the mystery.



Vishnu Balwant

The whole family had gathered to hear, all about the pilgrimage to Shirdi. His brother Vishnu Pant Balwant was also present, and a keen desire to visit Shirdi arose in him. He worked as a Thalati in Ville Parle and was rather busy. In 1917 he first visited Shirdi. Carefully he made all preparations, and roamed the fruit market so he could get the choicest unripe mangoes. Finally he found a fruit vendor who had delectable mangoes. Making sure that the fruit were unblemished and unripe he bought a basket of mangoes and set out to Shirdi. Thinking in his mind "If I get ripe mangoes they will spoil by the time I reach Shirdi, but these unripe mangoes will ripen there".

He reached Kopergaon and proceeded thence to Shirdi. Here at Shirdi, Baba was sitting with his devotees and talking, when the Dwarakamai was filled with an aroma of mangoes. The devotees looked at each other and wondered where the mangoes were kept. As Baba said nothing they just waited. Vishnu Pant in the meantime reached Shirdi and kept his belongings and the mangoes in the room and went for 'Dhuli Darshan'. Baba welcomed him saying ***"What have you brought for Me? Where are the mangoes?"*** Vishnu Pant was abashed and said "Baba the mangoes are in the room as they are unripe" to which Baba replied ***"Go and fetch them, can't you smell them?"*** Vishnu Pant went to the room and brought the basket and placed it before Baba. Upon opening it he was surprised that the mangoes were ripened perfectly and were ready to eat.

Happily Vishnu Pant stayed at Shirdi for three days. He made sure he had Rs.15/- for expenses for his return journey. On the day of his departure he bought a photograph of Baba hoping that Baba would touch it. He carried it to the Dwarakamai and waited. Baba beckoned to him saying "***Bhau give Me Rs.15/- as dakshina***". Vishnu Pant at once emptied his pocket and gave the Rs.15/-. Then Baba asked him for the photograph, which he happily gave. His joy knew no bounds when Baba took the photograph and held it to his heart for a moment. He returned the photograph and granted him permission to go.

Vishnu Pant though happy was in a quandary, as he had no money. Finally he decided to walk to Kopergaon as there was no money for the tonga. He walked about half a mile or so when a tonga drew up and stopped near him. The driver said "What are you doing walking in the heat of the day? You do not look like a villager?"

Vishnu Pant replied "I am Thalati so I am going to the next village". The tonga driver laughed and said "Come and have a seat I will take you to Kopergaon". Vishnu Pant was relieved, and he reached Kopergaon. He alighted from the tonga and collected his belongings. He looked up to thank the tonga driver, but, the driver and the tonga had disappeared.

He went into the station and looked around hoping he could find some acquaintances. But no one was around from whom he could borrow money. Finally the train pulled in and he decided to travel ticketless and bear the consequences. At the next station the Ticket Collector entered his compartment looking at him he said "Namaskar, Pithale Saab". Vishnu Pant however, could not recognize him. He feared that since the Ticket Collector recognized him he would surely ask for his ticket and would cause a great deal of embarrassment. But no such thing happened, and he reached Bombay without any problem.

The next day a huge automobile pulled up to his doorstep. A well dressed gentleman came to his home and enquired "Are you Thalati, Vishnu Pant Pithale?" Vishnu Pant was bewildered and thought "I must be in trouble now, why is he asking if I am the Thalati?" The gentleman said "I am J.R.D. Tata, I am in the process of buying land at Sahar (the present airport). I have a huge staff on my pay roll but they can't transcribe the Marathi papers into English and vice-verse. I heard you are a capable Thalati and also bilingual". Vishnu Pant was aghast at what he said and nodded his head. Then the gentleman continued "as a Thalati you earn only Rs.35/- a month. If you agree to work for me I will give you Rs.150/- per a month". Quickly Vishnu Pant said "I will do this transcription for you, but give me two days to think about working for you". Tata said "Alright" then drove off.

Vishnu pant was in turmoil now. "What if I give up my Government job with pension and benefits and this man does not keep his word? What if he dismisses me after his work is done?" he thought. He spent a restless night. Suddenly it dawned on him that Baba had emptied his pocket of Rs.15/- and was returning it ten fold. Two days later Tata's Secretary came to his home with the job 'appointment letter' and the details of the job benefits etc. And asked him to sign on the dotted line. He bowed to the photograph that Baba had blessed and signed.



This Photograph Baba hugged then gave to Vishnu B. Pithale
SOURCE: Ambrosia in Shirdi by Vinny Chitluri.

