

Experiences of Bayjabai Patel with Baba

The first person to comprehend the divine nature of Baba's personality were Ganpatrao Kote Patil and his wife Bayjabai Kote Patil from Shirdi. By nature, this couple was extremely pious, helping and religious. They always accorded due respect to any virtuous persons visiting Shirdi, touched their feet and looked after their needs.

This Boy, who had renounced the worldly pleasures and had a radiating personality, was the subject of curiosity of the entire Shirdi village. It was but natural that the eyes of the Patil couple fell on the Boy and they were overcome with paternal feelings of love and affection for Him. Bayjabai felt that her fondness for the Boy was pulling her towards Him. Those were the days when a group of powerful villagers were very strongly opposed to Baba. Under such circumstances, this Kote Patil couple got devoted to Baba from His first *darshan* and it continued till their last breath! They loved Baba as their own son. When majority of the populace was dismissing Baba as a mere mad man., Bayjabai gave Him the warmth of her love and affection.

The detailed description of happenings, when the Kote Patil couple went to take Baba's *darshan* for the first time, have been described by Shri Pandurang B. Kavade in his book titled *SHRI SAI MAHARAJ YANCHE CHARITRA* (Life of Shri Sai Maharaj).

As soon as Bayjabai came for His *darshan*, Maharaj immediately arose and stood up. He expectantly looked at Bayjabai like long lost calf looks at his mother. It was as if, in this birth, Baba was confirming their relation since their previous births. Some time elapsed in this state. Then Maharaj spontaneously uttered Mami (Aunty). This loving call and the child age of Maharaj, opened the floodgates of Bayjabai's heart. Her motherly instincts were aroused. Since the time of this incident till the time Bayjabai was alive, Maharaj looked upon her as a mother.

Shri Kavade further adds -

It is only Maharaj who knows as what Bayjabai appeared to Him during the first meeting! Because till that time it was His vow to renounce the worldly relations between human beings and treat all the mankind with an equal and same view point. This vow was easily broken in case of Bayjabai. She imprisoned this great soul in the bonds of motherly love.

In Shri Kavade's opinion:-

There were few apparent reasons because of which Baba made Shirdi His permanent residence. Chief among these reasons appears to be the love of Maharaj as a son for Bayjabai and her affection for Maharaj as a mother.

Whatever it may be, it is true that Baba had given Bayjabai the place of mother. No one else had the power to convince Baba against His wishes. Baba used to set aside His own pride and chit chatted with Bayjabai. He answered her questions very lovingly.

From the very beginning Bayjabai was regularly sending bhakris / rotis to Baba. She used to trace Baba by going through the various routes of the forest. She used to feed Him with her own hands. During the life time of Bayjabai and even after her passing away, a single day did not pass without Baba eating bhakri/roti from the Kote Patil household. Similarly, Bayjabai did not have her meals till she had fed Baba. After her demise, her son continued the tradition.

Written proof of this has been provided by Bayjabai's son and Baba's favorite devotee Tatya Kote Patil. On 25th December 1915, he has written:-

I am Tatya Ganpat Kote Patil, resident of Shirdi. On request I am furnishing the following information in the presence of Diwan Bahadur Shri Sai Abad Sansthan.

I have been staying at Shirdi. Since my birth, I have been brought up by Shri Samartha Sai Baba. My both parents have been always in the service of Shri Samartha. We have always treated Shri Samartha as an elderly person from our household and as our family deity. Till some 12 years ago, Shri Samartha did not accept alms / dakshina from anyone. He used to manage His livelihood by asking for bhiksha at certain houses only.

Till I was a small child, whenever needed, my parents used to provide His needs. Since the time I attained manhood, I have been doing the same even after my father's demise. As the days passed, the sadhana of Shri became more intense. The number of devotees also increased substantially. From time to time, I have been financing the required expenditure. I have been incurring the expenditure assuming that I am the son of Shri Samartha. Day by day the expenses have been rising and now they have increased to daily about Rs. 75 to Rs. 125. I have been meeting all this expenditure mainly from the dakshina being received by Shri and balance from my own assets. My present state is hundred times better than the state in which I was earlier. This is due to Shri Samartha's blessings.

At the end of this statement, the signature of Late Taty Kote Patil appears and is witnessed by prominent persons of Shirdi such as Ramchandra Dada Kote Patil, Bayjabai Appaji Kote, Pandurang Bhikaji Shelke and Sakharam Mahadu Kote Patil. Further, it is stated that at this event Rao Bahadur Hari Vinayak Sathe, Dr. Pillay, Chinchanihar and other respected devotees of Baba were also present.

Later on, after Baba settled down in the Masjid, He started going out for bhiksha / alms. On some days, He used to go 4-5 times to Bayjabai for bhiksha. However, Bayjabai never sent Him back empty handed. On the contrary, Bayjabai used to invite Him inside her home. Very rarely Baba entered their home. Bayjabai always coaxed Him to have His meals in her house. On such occasions, Rambhabai (Tatyaba's wife and Bayjabai's daughter-in-law) served the food. She stood in a corner and listened to their conversation between Baba and Bayjabai. In this regard, Rambhabai states -

Their conversation was full of love and affection - as if it is a conversation between a mother and her son. Before starting the meals, Baba used to inquire whether they have prepared any non-vegetarian food. Because, for about 40 years, He had not even touched non-vegetarian food. Bayjabai also used to invite Baba for meals only when she had prepared only vegetarian food. Baba used to have bhakri, pithale, onions, chillies, pickles etc. He did not have any other item even if coaxed by Bayjabai. On some occasions, He used to have little milk.

Bayjabai was curious about Baba's earlier years. She used to ask several questions about it. But Baba did not give any clue about the matter. Bayjabai repeatedly insisted him to bring the members of his family at least once, or give them their whereabouts to bring them. But Baba did not make even a passing mention of region, caste, parents or acquaintances. If asked "Where from did you come?" His answer was "From far-far away". I have heard this type of conversation between the two on several occasions.

Rambhabai further adds -

Even after Shri Baba took Samadhi, every morning and evening, the naivedya of bhakri is sent from our home. Even on auspicious days it is naivedya of bhakri only. Baba never left it untouched. He at least tasted some portion of it.

Even today, no one from Bayjabai's household touches any food, till naivedya is first offered to Baba.

As her end came nearer, Bayjabai became bed-ridden. At that time, on one or two occasions, Baba came to their house and gave some advice.

At the time of her death, Bayjabai was around 75 years of age. Her funeral procession was progressing by the usual route. At that time, Baba sent a message, saying that it should be taken to Dwarkamai. As the procession was passing, Baba stood on the foundation of Dwarkamai and lamented in a resonant voice..... Oh! My Kote's mother is going away. My aunt has gone.

The entire village was shaken up by this vibrant cry.

Several generations of Bayjabai's family are rich. Therefore, Baba asked them to perform the rites of 13th day on a grand scale. Thousands of poor people were given food on that day.

Baba had asked His ardent devotee Megha to perform Gayatri - Purascharan. On 3rd January 1912, the rites were completed and meals were served to some Brahmins. On the same day evening, Ganpatrao Kote Patil (husband of Bayjabai and father of Tatya) passed away.