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26th May, 1936.

Kasinath Kanderao Garde, B.A., L.L.B., 65, Retired Sub Judge of Nagpur, Congress Nagar, Nagpur, says:

Our family guru is a Ramachandra Tikotkar. My own personal guru is Ramanand Bidkar Maharaj. He was deep in wisdom and possessed marvellous powers and knowledge. After giving me *upadesh*, he told me that I should go round seeing a number of great souls, i.e. saints, taht he had seen in his tours, and he gave me a list of them. He told me taht all these saints would feel they are of one family and they would recognise me as connected with their stock and accord me a hearty welcome. That would confirm me, he said, in the belief of the truth and value of his instruction to me.

One of these saints that I was ordered to visit was Sai Baba of Shirdi. My guru Bidkar Maharaj in 1898 told me to visit him, saying that he himself (B.M) had seen that saint (Sai Baba) 25 years back, i.e., about 1873. I went to see Sai Baba in 1912 or 1913 during the May vacation, as I was then SubJudge at Khamgaon. As soon as I went and saw him, without any introduction or announcement, Sai Baba welcomed me heartily saying i.e., **“Welcome Ramdas”**. Ramdas is not my name. But, the hearty welcome he gave me was in accordance with that my Guru Ramanand Bidkar Maharaj asked me to expect and the word ‘Ramdas’ I took to be reference to that guru, by whose order I went to Shirdi and also to the earlier family guru, whose name was Ramachandra. I stayed there with my college chum (of the Deccan College) Bala Bhate, who lived there, at Shirdi, a life devoted to Sai Baba. Each succeeding day, I tried to go but the journey was put off, for 6 days as Baba said **“Wait till tomorrow”**. Meanwhile, I had kept with me Rs.6 or 7 for the expenses of my return journey.

Sai Baba asked me first time a *dakshina* of Rs.2 and Rs.1 each day for four days thereafter. On the next day thereafter, when I had got Rs.0-3-6 left in my pocket, Baba said of his own knowledge, **“Why keep that Rs. 0-3-6 with you? Give that up as dakshina. God will provide you with plenty”**. I at once gave up the 0-3-6 I had. Before I started for Shirdi, I was at Poona Reay Market and I purchased three excellent ‘Payari’ mangoes for presentation to Sai Baba, and as soon as I saw Sai Baba, I presented them. Sai Baba then took them up, eyed them with joy and said they were nice looking and ordered them to be cut up and he distributed the pieces as *prasad* (taking a piece himself). Before cutting the fruit, Sai Baba, out of his own vast knowledge, said **“Hallo! These fruits he (i.e. Garde) had purchase in the market for me and has brought the whole lot to me, without tasting any part of it. This is the opposite of what a pandit did the other day. Pandit had got a whole packet of laddûs intending to give them to me. But, on the way after bathing at the Godaari River, he got hungry and ate away some of the laddûs and brought me the remainder. These fruits are not or sesha like that”**.

This narration showed us (1) that he appreciated the pure and strong bhakti that we, devotees, should have towards the guru, avoiding the slight involved in presenting him with *sesha* and (2) that by his (Sai Baba's) knowledge, even of unseen events taking place far away from Shirdi, he deepens and strengthens the faith and reliance we place in him and in our guru. My faith in my guru's teaching and my adherence to him was deepened by all that Sai Baba said and did.

On the 8th day, I got Sri Sai's permission and left Shirdi with money lent me by Bala Saheb Bhate. Once, during those 8 days, I saw a strange sight. Hari Sitaram Dixit had returned, after conducting some big case and with a trunk full of solid silver rupees which were his fees- it may be Rs.1000. He placed the trunk before Sai Baba as an offering to Sai Baba. Baba dipped both his palms into the silver heap and gave away palmful after palmful of rupees from the trunk to fakirs and others, who were gathering there in crowds waiting for such windfalls. The entire money was in a few minutes thus gifted away. H.S.Dixit felt in no way disconcerted at the disappearance of his hard-earned cash.

A few words on Balasaheb Bhate may next be mentioned. At college, he was a free thinker, a free smoker, a veritable *charvaka*, whose creed may be thus summed up, "Eat, drink and be merry to-day, for tomorrow we die'. Katr yatra Bhante tatra Dhumaha I used to remark jocularly at his inveterate smoking being myself free of the tobacco habit. He became *mamlatdar* and was a very efficient officer much liked by his collector. He was Mamlatdar of Kopergoan for about 5 years (1904-1909). All that time he was scoffing at his educated friends (who met him on their way to Shirdi) having any respect for Sai, whom Bhate described as 'as a mad man'. The friends asked him just to see Sai Baba once and then form his judgement. In 1909, Bhate camped at Shirdi and saw Sai Baba day after day. On the fifth day Sai Baba covered him with a *gerua* garment. From that day, Bhate was a changed man. He did not care for earnings or work. From that day up to his death, he only wished to be at Shirdi, to do *seva* to Sai Baba, to live and die in his presence. Sai Baba made his friend Dixit draw up an application for leave for one year and with Sai Baba's help, Bhate's signature was

gut to it. The Collector gave him one year's time to see if he would return to his old self. But, at the end of the year, he still continued to be 'mad after his guru' and was granted compassionate pension of about 30 rupees as one afflicted with 'religious melancholia'.

Asked for the reason of his change, Bhate told me the putting of the (Bhagawa) *gerua* garment on him by Sai Baba marked the crisis. 'By that' he said, 'my original frame of mind was removed and in its place quite a new frame of mind was put in'. After that attending to worldly duties- especially official duties- became unthinkable. He then lived at Shirdi, attending to his *Nitya Karma*, *Upanishad*-reading etc, before Sai (Sai would offer remarks on that reading occasionally). His wife and family came to Shirdi and lived with him.

I have written a short account of my visit to Sai Baba. The reasons for the visit and the reception I got at his hands are published in the Mahratti biography of my guru.