

XXX

7th December, 1936.

Sagun Meru Naik, Mahrath, age 47, Teashop Shirdi, says:

I belong to the village Borri (Boori) Marmagoa, Poona Taluk. I was grazing cattle there. I went thence on my travels for years visiting and residing at Belgaum. I stayed at Narsowadi with Tembe Maharaj for 2 years: next with Ajunkar Maharaj. Next Gangapur I visited. I was ill and I

stayed with Siddharood Maharaj of Bubli. Next after going to Rameshwar, Pandharpur etc., I came here (1911-12). Baba remarked you have come from a “Mota Darbar” in allusion to my stay with Siddharood Maharaj. Baba gave me advice for 5 months after my arrival. When I asked him for leave to go away, he said

“stay here doing something. God will give you (Barakath) blessing.” I obeyed and have made Shirdi my home and last abode. From that time, I am running this teashop and refreshment stall and sale of sundries (i.e.) Baba’s pictures, arati books and devotional goods. I am prospering ever since I began that life here. I begged Baba that he should protect me and he said he would. I was doing petty services (i.e.) replenishing the Masjid lamps with oil.

I have had ample evidence of Baba’s powers when I came to Shirdi in 1911-12. I came from Hyderabad accompanying a Vysia Sowcar of that state, who as a Sai bhakta, was paying his devout visit to Baba. That man brought with him his paralysed daughter. She could not stand on her legs or walk. She had to skip on the ground using her hands in place of the powerless legs. She had to be carried into Baba’s presence at first. But, on the third day of her arrival, she began to use her legs a little. On the eighth day, she was able to walk. The cure was most marvellous and due entirely to Baba’s grace. Another case of paralysis cured by Baba’s grace was that of Mr. Ghaisas. Mr. Ghaisas was formerly in G.I.P Railway service. His wife came here and was cured of her paralysis in a few days.

In 1914, I had a dream wherein Baba appeared and said ‘Bring me soft boiled rice’. Then for two years, I took boiled rice to Baba without any ghee in it. Then he told me to put some ghee into the food before taking it to him. Since then, and up-to-date, I have been carrying boiled rice with a little of ghee and first offering it to the God of Fire at Baba’s dhuni (at the Mosque). I place part of it in a pot (Kolumba) for the use of Baba and throw the remainder to the dogs. For 5 or 6 years when huge crowds were daily flocking to Baba, I ran a busy hotel here, and engaged some Brahmin cooks to cook and serve food. In October 1919 when the crowd had fallen doff, I closed down the hotel.

I know Upasani Maharaj. He had arrived here at Shirdi shortly before me. After I came he was living at Mr.H.S.Dixit's wada and being fed for 5 or 6 months at Mr.Dixit's expense. This was when Mr.G.S.Khaparde was here. Madhav Rao Deshpande (H.S.Dixit's agent) and U.Maharaj then had a quarrel and the latter removed to Khandoba temple to live there.

In the middle of 1912, the marble stone paduka of Sri Sai Baba was installed at the foot of Baba's favourite margosa tree in he Sathe Wada. Bhai Alibagkar, a Mahratti vendor of Udhbattis started the idea. Practically the whole of the expenses were borne by Ram Rao Khotare of Bombay. Baba Ali was too poor to pay for this Baba himself gave Rs.25 as his contribution. Four Brahmins, representing the four Vedas, were brought from Kopergaon for performing the ceremony. Amongst the local people Balasaheb Bhate, Bapu Sahib Jog, Dada Kelkar and Upasani Maharaj took a leading part, and helped in the installation.

Some time later, one Martand, a mad Brahmin was living here, depending upon the bounteous supplies of food that Baba was throwing to all comers. There were hundreds of men living at Shirdi depending on Baba's doles of food for their sustenance. This man, one day, went to the Neem tree and with a huge stone broke the paduka into two. He went into the temple of Mahadeo and Parvati (where the images had been installed at Tatyapa Patel's instance) and broke those two images also. Baba was asked if a new paduka was to be ordered and to be installed in place of the broken one. Baba did not approve of that idea but said taht mere anna santi would suffice. We fed 200 or 300 people soon after that. Two hundred or more were everyday waiting to be fed at Shirdi in those days.

