

Krishnaji Kasinath Joshi was known as Kusa Bhav and was the son of Kasinath Padmakar Joshi, a Joshi *Vatandar*, living at Mirzgaon, 70 miles from Ahmednagar. He was born in 1866.

Kusa Bhav's experience with Baba is very interesting as a study in Baba's ability to confer mysterious power. He was a poor *vatandar*, having passed a vernacular school examination to qualify himself for a master's place on Rs. 5 or Rs. 7 per month. He also got himself trained for the hereditary duties of a village priest. But neither the school master's place nor the priesthood attracted him. He was ambitious. He found once Datta Maharaj, a *Guru* with great power and went to him and got trained in *Yoga*, that is, *Asana*, *pranayama* and the raising of *Kundalini Sakti*. The *Guru* imparted to him only the general teachings, but this *sishya* was not satisfied and prevailed upon the *Guru* to give him instruction in *Maranam*, *Uchchatanam* and *Vasikaram*. The *Guru* gave those *mantras* to him and he learnt them all. He had therefore to deal with evil spirits, and so he wore an iron bangle as a talisman when he was repeating the *mantras*. He mastered the *mantras* by his *japa*, and he was able to order sweetmeats to come, and they would come. He would spread out his hands and his hands would become filled with *pedas*. He would show this to the on lookers and distribute the *pedas* to them. But he was debarred from using them for himself. He could destroy *abhicharan*, evil spells, by others. When he was aged only 22 in 1888, fully armed with these magical powers, the *Guru* left him, wanting to go to the Himalayas to live there alone up to the end of his life. Kusa Bhav accompanied him up to Delhi, and there, when parting, the *Guru* told him that he should go to Sai Baba of Shirdi whom he referred to as his elder brother, '*Maja Vadil Bhai*' and that he

should go to him and do whatever he directed. With this injunction he disappeared. Kusa Bhav in 1908 went to Baba at Shirdi, but, as soon as he came near the Mosque, Baba would not allow him to enter. "Throw away your iron bangle. Stop the production of your *pedas* and then come" was Sai Baba's order. Kusa Bhav broke the iron bangles and throw away. Then to sustain himself, he had to beg for food at Shirdi. Baba's order was that he should sit in a corner of the Mosque and go on reading *Dasabodha* of Ramdas Swami during the day. At night Kusa Bhav would sleep wherever he found some place to lie in. Baba gave him no *upadesa mantra*.

When Kusa Bhav went in 1908 Baba had few visitors, and he was not even asking for *dakshina*. But he would take only a few *pice* for his fuel for *dhuni*. Nana Saheb Nimonkar was a big man visiting him. Baba imparted faith to those resorting to him by his internal work and internal operation. He would ask every one to stick to his *Ishta Devata* and would grant them *Sakshatkara* of that *Ishta Devata*. Kusa Bhav stayed three full years at a stretch with Baba, and afterwards he visited Shirdi off and on for 9 years. Baba then told him, "See a man with three heads, that is, see Datta at Gangapur." Every year Kusa Bhav went to Gangapur twice; one for *Guru Poornima* and the other for *Magha Poornima*. Baba once told him to do 108 *parayanams* of *Guru Charitra*, taking 3 days for each *parayana*, and Kusa Bhav did this at Gangapur and stayed there for 10 or 11 months for this purpose.

As for his mantric powers Baba had forbidden their use and he was not using them. he felt the loss of mantric exercise keenly. One Ekadasi day, however, he visited Baba, and Baba asked him, "What do you eat today"" Kusa Bhav replied "Nothing, it is *Ekadasi* today."

Baba: What does *Ekadasi* mean?

Kusa Bhav: *Upavasa*.

Baba: What is *Upavasa*?

Kusa Bhav: It is like *Rojas*.

Baba: What is *Rojas*?

Kusa Bhav: It means eating nothing except *Kandamula*.

Kanda means tubers, usually sweet potatoes, and *Mula* means roots.

Baba punning upon the word *Kanda*, called it *Kaanda*. *Kaanda* means onion. Baba said, "Kaanda you are eating. Here is *Kaanda* for you." So, saying, Baba handed over few onions to Kusa Bhav and asked him to eat them. Kusa Bhav replied, "Baba, if you eat, I will also eat." Baba ate some and Kusa Bhav also ate some. Then visitors arrived. Baba wanting to have fun, and said, "Look at this *Bamnia*, he is eating onions on an *Ekadasi* day." Kusa Bhav said that Baba ate it and so he also ate it. Baba said, "No, no; you see what I ate." He then vomited. What Baba vomited was really '*Kanda*.' Baba said, "See, it is not onion but sweet potatos." Kusa Bhav was surprised and thought the production of sweet potatos was his opportunity. he fell upon the sweet potatos and swallowed them. Baba abused him and beat him, saying "Why do you eat the vomit – *uchishta*?" Kusa Bhav did not answer. In a moment, Baba's mood changed. He said, "I shall give you now my *varam*. Henceforth you will have the power to produce the *udhi*, that is, *udhi* from the *dhunimayi* of Shirdi, by merely remembering me and holding forth your hands. Give this *udhi* freely. It will help all people and you will get *punya*. This was said to contrast Baba's boon with Kusa Bhav's previously distributing stolen *pedas*, which if eaten would result in sin.

As Kusa Bhav was giving this statement, he was seated on a bed at Poona on a cold day and suddenly he stretched out his hand with closed eyes and uplifted face, and in a minute he said, "Here is *udhi*." His palms were full of *udhi*. "Hold your hands and receive the *udhi*" he said. Mr. Avaste, who was with Mr. B. V. N. Swami, stretched out a piece of paper as the *udhi* was falling from Kusa Bhav's hands, and it was found to be warm, coming fresh from the *Dhunimayi* on a cold day. Kusa Bhav used this power of producing *udhi* with great effect. There was an aristocratic family in Poona where a patient had a longstanding illness, paralysis probably, and Kusa Bhav, by the use of this *udhi*, cured him. "This production of *udhi*", Kusa Bhav says, "is a power vested in him by Baba once and for all and does not require any *japa* on his part, but only prayer. this *udhi* removes various ills and might even cure barrenness." He said that he had practically given up the production of *pedas*; but the temptation of producing them was sometimes irresistible. Once at Shirdi itself, this Kusa Bhav produced *pedas*. he also used his old power of exorcising *Abhicharan* in the case of Rajmachikar's grandson, who was suffering from mysterious *biba* marks, that is, marks of the marking nut on his body, on his cloths, even his bed clothes and cured him.

LIFE OF SAI BABA

During one visit, Baba told Kusa Bhav, "Next time you come, come two of you." His father was with him at the time and Baba's order meant "Come married." Shortly thereafter he got married, but he went to Shirdi alone without his wife, at first. Then his wife came to Shirdi and took him away to lead a married life. In consequence of this, he had children and grandchildren.

On one occasion, Baba told him, "Why do you take the trouble to come all this distance to see me? I am there." Kusa Bhav could not understand this. Then Baba described a specific plot of land in Mirzgaon and Kusa Bhav went there and after clearing the prickly pear on it, found a *samadhi* there. That *samadhi* he began to worship. There he got *darsan* of Baba, that is, Datta Baba, whose *samadhi* it was, and that Datta Baba always appears once a year on Datta *Jayanthi*. That saint, however, was called Pakir Shah. He lived 200 years ago and held the land on which the tomb now exists as an *inam* from the *jagirdar*. That Pakir Shah or Datta as he is called, occasionally talks of Sai Baba, though he talks very little. People can see him only once a year. This Pakir Shah does not give any help either for *jnana marga* or *bhakti marga*. His appearance merely inspires faith. he is to be seen and worshipped or bowed to, and he says, "Sai Baba is alive", but whether as a spirit or as some *Avadar*, he does not say. Pakir Shah says that he and Sai Baba are inter-related as persons of the same order. Baba received Kusa Bhav from one Datta Maharaj and left him under the care of Datta Pakir. Kusa Bhav passed away and his tomb near the foot of Shivaji Hills is worshipped by his devotees.

LIFE OF SAI BABA