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Introduction

A few years ago, a good friend of mine asked me meet an astrologer fondly known as Masterjee. She described him as a cute old man who chewed betel leaf and worked from an office at the back of a hotel in Candolim, Goa. I was immediately curious as to what an astrologer would be doing inside a hotel and, moreover, her description of him made him sound like a character straight out of one of my favourite childhood novels, the ‘Malgudi Days’ series by R K Narayan.

When I went to meet Masterjee, I had a very pleasant experience and felt as if I had been transported into the world of R K Narayan’s stories. Masterjee read my astrological chart very accurately, and I asked for an appointment for my mother to have a reading with him the next day.

During the session with my mother, he happened to tell her with conviction that his wife was very saintly and a devotee of Sai Baba of Shirdi. She had been connected

with Baba since the age of five and been blessed with many dreams and visions. I was intrigued to hear about his wife, who everyone addressed as Aai though, at that time, I didn't know much about Sai Baba.

The following day, I asked Masterjee if I could have a chance to meet Aai and gain her blessings. He said he would take her permission first and, if she agreed, I could certainly see her. He told us that she usually spoke very little and kept to herself. I was very excited as I knew this was a rare opportunity to meet a devotee as special as Aai.

About a week later, Aai gave her consent, and I went to visit them at their home. The home had images of Baba in various corners and there was a certain peace that emanated from there. At that time, I did not speak Konkani or Marathi fluently, so Masterjee translated and coordinated our communication. I found a beautiful simplicity about being in Aai's presence.

Over the next two years, I would frequently visit Aai and felt very drawn to her. During this time, she related some anecdotes from her life and shared her experiences with Baba. I was also blessed with some of my own personal experiences of Him. My dear friend and spiritual guide, Gautam Sachdeva, then suggested that all of these anecdotes should be compiled into a book that could inspire devotees of Sai Baba since Aai's life is testimony to

Baba's everpresent grace and she is an instrument through whom He operates.

This book contains the most important incidents and miracles of Baba in Aai's life. Each of these stories clearly shows how Baba continues to steer and guide us, and is always overseeing the welfare of His devotees. Some stories display instances of miracles in which Aai has forewarned people of incidents that have come true to the last word. Of course, in all humility, she attributes everything to Baba and acknowledges Him as the sole doer of all actions.

A little about Masterjee: Although his ancestors were devotees of Baba and had been blessed by His physical darshan, Masterjee himself was not a devout follower of Baba initially. However, after meeting Aai, Baba turned his life around and, soon, his whole life began to revolve around Baba in some way or another. Baba had even miraculously cured his father of asthma, and this leela is shared later in the book.

Masterjee was a schoolteacher by profession and began the study of astrology during his early years of teaching. In time, he became quite proficient with the practice and once he retired, he devoted all his time to being an astrologer.

In the early days of meeting Aai and hearing about the miracles, I was enchanted and occasionally, taken aback

with astonishment. Then I had my very own experience in which Aai told me something that soon came to pass.

In the first chapter, I narrate this experience that took place in my second meeting with Aai.

The Dussehra Forewarning

One day, I was leaving my home to seek darshan of my Guruji, Pujya Dharamdas Baba, whose ashram is located in Sihor, Gujarat, and a friend was accompanying me from Goa. En route to the airport, we went to meet Aai and Masterjee to ask for their blessings.

After meeting them, just as we were about to leave, Aai asked me when I would be returning. Before I could reply, Masterjee interrupted, urging us to hurry, and said to Aai, “Let them go, they should not miss their flight.”

At this point, I remember Aai telling me, “You will be here on the day of Dussehra.” This stands out clearly in my memory because she repeated the statement thrice. Since it is not in my nature to keep track of the days and dates of all holidays, I was unaware of the date of the Dussehra festival or when we would return. We hastened to leave and asked for their blessings; Masterjee gave us some *udi* (sacred ash from Sai Baba’s temple in Shirdi) and we set off.

I reached Gujarat and soon settled down at the ashram.

It was a wonderful opportunity and blessing for me to be in the holy presence of my Guru for a few days.

My mother and I used to communicate over the phone and she kept me abreast on the home front as she was taking care of her mother and aunt, both of whom lived with us in Goa.

Over the next few days, she told me that Auntyji's health was not good, and she asked me to speak with her on the phone for it would cheer her up. It was not something to be unduly worried about because Auntyji was prone to indigestion. She occasionally experienced nausea and vomiting that subsided with home remedies. My mother assured me that she would be fine within a day or two.

One evening, when I was sitting in silence at the ashram, I had a very strong urge to check my phone and I excused myself to go upstairs to my room. When I picked up my phone, there was a text message from my mother that said, 'Call me back immediately. Auntyji has passed away.'

While reading the message I intuitively knew that she had a peaceful transition, which my mother confirmed later. Some family members from Mumbai had already left for Goa to be with my mother. However, I was only able to leave the next morning as there were no trains or flights available that night.

It was only at the airport that it struck me that it was Dussehra! I was immediately reminded of Aai's words, "You will be here on the day of Dussehra."

Once I got home, Auntyji's last rites were completed smoothly. Later, the priest told me that it was an auspicious day for Auntyji's transition as Dussehra was also the same day that Sai Baba had taken His *mahasamadhi* (when an enlightened master consciously gives up his mortal body and merges with the Divine). This brought further consolation and a sense of calm for all of us.

When I spoke to Aai about the incident later, she had a smile on her face and did not say much. All she said was, "You were supposed to be here and Baba got you here." She reassured me that this was a good omen and a sign of Baba's presence in my life.

Aai repeatedly says that everything that happens through her is only Baba's doing and she has no awareness about these actions. All she encourages devotees to do is to love Him like one loves their mother, to build a relationship with Him and to rely on Him for everything. She says then one will begin to experience Baba's grace and care.



The next few chapters explore the early days of Masterjee and Aai's life, how they became devotees of Baba and how their lives were miraculously interwoven with each other's through Baba's grace.

How Aai Was First Drawn To Baba As A Child

Aai's connection with Baba – in this lifetime – started during her childhood at the tender age of five when she first saw a statue of Him at her aunt's home. "Sai Baba performed many miracles and we have felt blessed by Him," her aunt said when Aai asked about Him. Aai enjoyed visiting her aunt and listening to tales of Baba. Soon after that, someone gave her a *pothi* (small prayer book) of Sai Baba so that she could pray to Him too.

At that time, a girl named Anusaya lived in Aai's neighbourhood who had suffered from some type of mental trauma and lost the ability to speak coherently. She had become aggressive and used to scream violently at random intervals. Her family took her to numerous doctors and priests, and tried various things to cure her but nothing helped. Anusaya's sister was Aai's friend and both the girls had the small *pothi* of Sai Baba. With childlike faith,

they thought that if they touched the pothi to Anusaya's forehead, she would be cured.

Firmly clasping the pothi, they tried to place it on her forehead, but the girl got hostile and didn't let them approach her. They then tried to get her to recite the mantra 'Sai Ram' by asking her to repeat it after them.

Anusaya got even more agitated. Aai and her friend started reciting 'Sai Ram' over and over again. They did not have any feelings of devotion, but innocently believed that it would be good for the girl if she recited this mantra.

Then something bizarre happened; when she heard the chanting Anusaya became unconscious. Her mother came running and asked Aai, "What did you do to her?" Aai replied, "We did not do anything. We were just reciting Baba's name and suddenly Anusaya fainted."

Then Anusaya gestured to her mother, asking for a notebook and a pen to write. Everyone in the room was alert and knew that something unusual was happening. Aai told Anusaya, "Since you are unable to say it, write down Baba's name."

Anusaya took the pen and wrote 'S' a few times in Marathi. She could not manage more than that. She tried once again but it was fruitless. Then, Aai asked her to wait a while before attempting to write again. The next time, she wrote down 'Sa' a few times and eventually managed to write the complete word 'Sai'. Everyone was delighted!

Within a few months, the girl slowly recovered and was able to speak. She eventually finished her college and went on to lead a normal life. This incident planted the seeds of faith and devotion in Aai as this was the first time she had witnessed Baba's miracle take place in front of her at a very young age.



The photograph of Baba that Aai would worship