

Sai Pearls of Wisdom, Part 48-B

SHIRDI SAMADHI August 24th, 2023

**Om Sri Sai Ram
Prasanthi Sandesh**

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Prasanthi Sandesh

Sai Pearls of Wisdom welcomes you. Thank you very much for your time.

Ratnakaram Krishnama Raju, affectionately called Krishnappa, is the son of Chinna Venkama Raju and first cousin to Baba. Three years younger than his precious cousin, he was His childhood friend and one of the earliest devotees. As a young boy, he was an active participant of the 'Pandari Bhajan Group'. When Baba returned from Uravakonda, Krishnappa became a regular *bhajan* singer as well as tabla player, accompanying Baba around Puttaparthi on many occasions.

Baba showed him a vision of the *Samadhi* of Shirdi Baba's associate. He was also a witness to Baba in the form of a snake in the Mandir shrine when Baba was away in Mysore during Deepavali.

Baba gave him the responsibility of partially supervising the construction of Prasanthi Nilayam. In this capacity, Krishnama Raju coordinated with Baba on the construction work, especially when Baba was away in Bangalore and in Coorg. He would pay wages to the construction workers and help to grind the mix for the construction work. He was in-charge of the dynamo in the Mandir and later in-charge of the power generator. For a while, he looked after the light and sound systems as well.

Between 1945 to 1975, he accompanied Baba to various places on His tours around the country. And between 1951 to 1955, it was his responsibility to prepare coffee exclusively for Baba.

Baba selected his bride Saraswathamma and performed the marriage in the Prasanthi Nilayam Bhajan Hall on the 1st of March 1956. Baba took upon Himself all the responsibilities connected with the marriage, decorating the marriage procession jeep and feeding relatives and friends for the five days of celebration.

Krishnappa has been an inspiration for all visiting and resident devotees of Prasanthi Nilayam *ashram*. He has willingly been interviewed continuously for as many as four years, providing invaluable information. He is a happy family man with three daughters and two sons.

Well, Baba may have even stayed in Pedda Venkama Raju's grocery shop for a while.

"I do not belong to you alone!" He would repeatedly remind his relatives. He was even restless even at the home of His sister Venkamma and her husband Subba Raju also. Any expression of anger or pain greatly distressed Him. Later, He may have felt that the outward manifestations of His Divinity and the growing number of His followers were unduly troubling the family. Certainly when the flow of followers increased, Venkamma's house became too cramped for space.

The Karnam Subbamma then offered Baba her spacious house for His spiritual activities. One day, Baba sent for Subbamma and Kamalamma. They went to His house with an offering of coconuts, bananas and other fruits.

Kamalamma would say of it later, "He used to wear only shorts and a shirt those days. After His bath, He came and stood in a bath towel. We carried a few coconuts which He broke before a Shirdi Baba's picture He had."

Then He said, "I am not a ghost! I am Shirdi Baba!"

"He materialized flowers, bananas and coconut pieces, offered them to Shirdi Baba's photograph, performed *Arathi* and lay down. We woke Him up after some time and offered a *dhoti* and a shirt and invited Him to come for dinner. He readily agreed. He came after 2 or 3 days with Subba Raju of Kamalapuram accompanying Him. We offered food on a silver plate to Baba and on a plantain leaf to Subba Raju. Baba mixed together all the dishes offered and ate everything. He did not leave anything behind.

Soon after, He settled down in our house itself. We kept a Shirdi Baba photo on a table in the center of the hall.

He said to us, "You will not have children in this life but I will be there as your child. You may have to undergo a lot of hardships because of your adopted son' but be assured, you will not have any more birth!"

Though Karnam Subbamma had immense maternal affection for Baba, this never affected her devotion to Him. She saw Baba as God. Once again as she did when Sathya was a small boy, she saw the universe in His mouth and fainted. When she regained consciousness, she invited Him inside her house, making Him sit in a chair, putting His Feet on a silver plate, performed *Pada Pooja* and sprinkled water on her head.

When other *Brahmins* discouraged her devotion to a *Kshatriya* boy, she said, “He is Krishna Bhagavan! Yes, He is God of the Gods and He’s God to me! It is my wish to follow Him and worship Him!”

Baba used a small room in Subbamma’s house, both as a dressing room and the place where He spoke to visitors about their lives. Later this will be popularly called the interview room or ‘*Korika*’ room. “*Korika*’ means desire, where boons are granted. The house had a large hall with four pillars at the center. *Bhajan*, *pooja* and all other function in the village were conducted at this place.

Devotees would decorate these pillars and Baba would sit in a chair at the center. As time progressed, *Pada Pooja*, anointing, and other functions were celebrated later. But at night, He slept in Pedda Venkama Raju’s house.

Initially, when Baba returned from Uravakonda, *bhajans* were held only on Thursdays. Later, as the following increased, people gathered on other days as well, coming to seek personal audience. Encouraged by Baba, Subbamma and Kamamma became perfect examples of hospitality, their cooking becoming a continuous affair to provide for the large influx of visiting devotees.

“The number of visitors would often swell unexpectedly and the prepared food threatened to be insufficient. At such times, Baba who had instructed that all devotees should be fed, would be informed of the predicament. He would then bless the food which would multiply mysteriously so that everyone would have his or her fill.

The following would be such an instance as narrated by an old lady who was staying in Karnam’s house then. He asked two coconuts to be brought. When they were given to Him, He struck one against the other and both would break exactly into halves. He then sprinkled the coconut water on the little heap of rice and vessels containing the other items and gave us the signal to proceed with the task of serving all who have come or may come until the dusk!”

In years to come, Baba would especially remember Subbamma’s dedicated hospitality. He would talk of her incessant work from dawn until midnight – boiling rice, grinding chutneys, mixing curries and frying papads – all the many exact processes of cooking for the varied groups of people arriving at all hours of the day!

“The grinder in home was never silent,” Baba would say! During this period, Kondappa, Keshappa, Janakiram, Krishnama Raju and Venkamma were Baba’s very early attendants, staying with Him throughout the day. It is a rare privilege indeed to attend to His personal needs and be fortunate witnesses to many astounding occurrences.

Once, before He had moved to the Karnam’s house, when Baba’s activities were becoming uncontrollable, His furious father ordered, “Lock this crazy fellow inside the house”, which was done.

From inside the house, Baba materialized *Vibuthi* and put it on the forehead of His cousins, who were watching Him through an open window. When the cousins reported this to their father Chinna Venkama Raju, He said that Baba probably obtained the ash from a country stove!

The children knew better for they had seen the *Vibuthi* being materialized. They emphatically clung to the veracity of their claim. Chinna Venkama Raju went to Baba and asked Him to show proof that He was extra-ordinary. Baba proceeded to show him a vision of Shirdi Baba's seat and shawl.

On another occasion during this confinement, when Venkamma brought food for Baba, He converted it into processed lime. Many others were given a vision of the shrine of Shirdi under different circumstances.

N. Kasturi narrates, "One evening, some people came from Penukonda to Puttaparthi. Among them was the old lawyer and a family friend, Krishnamachari. At the Karnam's house, he and others may have spoken to Pedda Venkama Raju about Sai Baba, for the latter expressed his inability to understand the overwhelming phenomenon. It is all a big mystery to him.

Upon this, Krishnamachari called Pedda Venkama Raju a cheat and charged him with various misleading innocent village folks with tall stories. This upset Pedda Venkama Raju so much that He went to Baba and challenged Him to convince the doubters about His Divinity so that they might not blacken his name as the lawyer had done.

Baba asked him to bring all doubters directly to Him. At this, the Penukonda party was taken to Pedda Venkama Raju's house where Baba was at that time. Subbamma accompanied them.

Baba asked Subbamma if she would like to see the Shirdi *Samadhi*. When she agreed, He took her inside the house to an inner room and said, "Look!"

Much to her surprise, she could see the *Samadhi* with all the flowers, incense sticks with smoke and fragrance – everything down to the last detail; and an attendant sitting in one corner, murmuring some *mantras* to himself.

Baba told her, "On this side, see the Anjaneya temple and on the far distance, see the margosa tree!"

It appeared to her as if in some vast space looking at the scene in Shirdi, the entire landscape spreading out before her for miles and miles to the horizon in the distance!

Well, when she was brought out after this thrilling experience, she persuaded Krishnamachari to follow Baba to the same inner room. Baba took them all in one by one and vouchsafed to each the same vision – a panoramic view of the *Samadhi* at Shirdi and its locale.

Pedda Venkama Raju says that he was taken inside after all the rest and when he came out, he was a changed man! His own doubt has vanished. The friends from Penukonda apologised for the slighting remarks and said that with a Divine phenomenon like Baba, the sanest remark for anyone would be that it was un-understandable and mysterious. They and Subbamma and Pedda Venkama Raju were convinced that day, that the little boy of sixteen was really an incarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba!

Pedda Venkama Raju says that he instructed his family to consider Baba as Divine and not bother Him with any more littleness, neglect or temper.

So that has been the early powers, miracles, manifested there in Puttaparthi where Swami stayed for considerable period at the residence of Karnam Subbamma. *Karnam* means 'village head'.

And now, we will meet in the next session! Thank you.