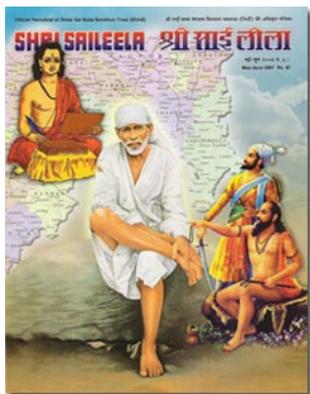


Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust, Shirdi



Estd. Year 1923

Year 7 Issue No. 1

Managing Editor : **J. M. Sasane** Editor : **B. R. Wakchaure**

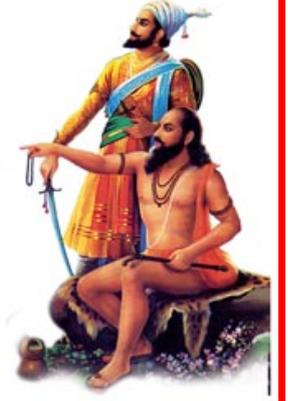
Executive Editor : **Vidyadhar Tathe**

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E-mail : saidadar@bom3.vsnl.net.in ● **Shirdi Office** : At Post Shirdi - 423 109, Tal. Rahata, Dist. Ahmednagar. Tel. : (02423) 258500 Fax : (02423) 258770 E-mail : saibaba_anr@sancharnet.in ● **Annual Subscription** : **Rs. 50/-** ● **Subscription for Life** : **Rs. 1000/-** | **Annual Subscription for Foreign Subscribers** : **Rs. 1000/-** (All the Subscriptions are Inclusive of Postage) ● **General Issue** : **Rs. 8/-** | **Shri Sai Punyatithi Special Issue** : **Rs. 15/-** | Published by B. R. Wakchaure, on behalf of Shree Sai Baba Sansthan Trust (Shirdi) at Sai Niketan, 804-B, Dr. Ambedkar Road, Dadar, Mumbai - 400 014 and printed by him at Perfect Print Product Pvt. Ltd., 139 Metallica Industries Premises, Govt. Industrial Estate, Kandivali (W), Mumbai - 400 067. The Editor does not accept responsibility for the views expressed in the articles published. All objections, disputes, differences, claims and proceedings are subject to Mumbai jurisdiction.

Homepage



Saints of Maharashtra teach the livelihood for the well-being of mankind

I now make my obeisance to the Saints and the virtuous – Nivrutti – Dnyaneshwar – Muktabai – Sopan – Eknath and his *Guru* Janardan – Tukaram – Kanha and Narhari. This book will not suffice if I name every Saint. Therefore, I bow down to all of them and pray for their blessings.

– Hemadpant in *Shri Sai Sat Charita*

In ‘*Shake*’ 1603 (i.e. 1681 A.D.) Saint Ramdas took *Samadhi* and not even two centuries had passed when the great one was born.

– *Shri Sai Sat Charita*

What is the Maharashtra *Dharma* which all the Saints - Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Ramdas to Sai Baba promoted ?

Maharashtra *Dharma* is the same *Vedic Dharma* simplified by the Saints so that the ordinary man from the highest to the lowest caste could achieve salvation while living as a householder and carrying out his worldly duties. The Saints brought the essence of the *Vedas* from Sanskrit to the language of the masses – Marathi. The simple method of ‘*Nam Japa*’ (chanting the Lord’s name) rejuvenated the religion, which was becoming confined to some rigid rituals of the privileged classes and was in a sort of a stupor.

Bhajans, Kirtans and *Pravachans* were their forte.

As said by Lord Krishna in the *Geeta* —

“*Yada yada hi dharmasya,*

Glanir bhavati bharat,

Abhyutthanam adharmasya,

***Tadatmanam srujamyaham...*”**

Whenever *Dharma* goes downhill and *Adharma* prevails, I take birth. Saints are the various manifestations of the Lord to bring this world in order.

How did the Saints achieve this ?

The foundation of the great teachings of Saints of Maharashtra was laid by *Sant* Dnyaneshwar, who at the tender age of 16 brought the essence of the *Geeta* along with his own beautiful elaborations in Marathi, a language, which he said, could win a bet against the sweetness of ‘*Amrit*’. He opened the doors to knowledge with his beautiful writing.

Spreading the message of the *Geeta* amongst the masses, he attracted them to ‘*Karmayog*’ and ‘*Bhaktiyog*’. This knowledge led to the path of self-realization.

Sant Namdev was a devotee of Lord Vitthal and he had the privilege of being very close to Him. It is said, Lord Vitthal used to listen to Namdev. He advised the householder to be dedicated to the Lord while carrying out his daily duties. He abhorred hypocrites who

professed to be great *Sanyasis*. He exhorted people to control their senses and realize their '*Swadharna*'.

Sant Eknath continued the tradition of educating the people and reviving the religion by mingling with all sorts of people — from the upper caste to the down-trodden. He taught them by narrating stories based on their own culture, tradition and life-style – the '*Bharuds*'.

The people realized that they could achieve salvation while doing their very own business and carrying the worldly chores. Thus many Saints from all walks of life were born. People became self-confident and took pride in their own profession. But, *Sant* Eknath also exposed hypocrisy and conceit of the so called *Pandits* and orthodox *Shastris*. He practiced, what he preached. He said, there is God in all living things and so, one should love all and hate none. He not only cared for humans but also for birds and animals. *Sant* Eknath wrote a Marathi commentary on the '*Chatushloki Bhagwat*', so that the ordinary man could understand the concept of God and His worship and achieve salvation.

Sant Tukaram was a contemporary of king Shivaji. His '*Gatha*' is considered to be an equivalent of the *Vedas*.

Sant Ramdas actively promoted the Maharashtra *Dharma* and gave it a new dimension. He built Hanuman temples in various places. He promoted the worship of Lord Ram and '*Ram Nam Japa*'. *Sant* Ramdas was king Shivaji's *Guru* and helped him to secure the Maharashtra *Dharma* and a Hindu kingdom to ward off Mughal attacks and religious conversions. He wrote the '*Dasbodh*', which describes various types and behaviour of people and the righteous way of life. His '*Manache Shlok*' are taught to children and recited even today to teach the mind, what is right and what is wrong.

Shri Sai Baba is a latter day *Avatar* in the tradition of the Saints of Maharashtra, manifested almost two hundred years after Ramdas *Swami*. He preached equality, non-discrimination amongst religions, as well as between rich and poor, high caste and low. He said that feeding the animals or birds would mean feeding Sai Himself. He asked His devotees to take care of the weak and sick, as well as to quench the thirst of the thirsty and feed the hungry without any discrimination. Sai Himself was kind and generous. He asked people to desist from fighting to show one-upmanship and not to speak ill of others. A pure mind, austerity, righteous thoughts and action were essential attributes for progress in a peaceful and contented life.

All the Saints promoted the Maharashtra *Dharma*, which symbolizes the following –

- God is everywhere, in all living beings, in the entire universe.
- '*Nam Japa*' is the simple way to achieve salvation while carrying out the household duties.
- Love all, hate none.
- Live truthfully, do not discriminate, and be humane.
- Listen to your conscience.
- Do not envy.
- Do not fall prey to pride and think you are the doer; but offer all you do to God, as it is He Who gets it done through you.
- Do not hurt anyone mentally, verbally or physically.
- Simple living, high thinking.

Baba practiced, what He preached and thus continued the good work started by the Saints Dnyaneshwar, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Ramdas and others. He attracted the devotion of people from all religions and walks of life. Today Maharashtra *Dharma* and Sai's message is spread world-wide through the august volume of the '*Shri Sai Sat Charit*'.

– Jyoti Ranjan Raut

jyotiraut53@rediffmail.com

– □□□

“Because of Shivaji, ‘Maharashtra *Dharma*’ survived;
Spread the ‘Maharashtra *Dharma*’, all over the world.”

“Get the Maratha to unite; make the ‘Maharashtra *Dharma*’ world-wide.”

– *Ramdas Swami*

Ramdas, the foremost of the Saints, left the banks of the Godavari and appeared on the banks of the Krishna, for the deliverance of the world.

So also Sai, the *Yogeshwar* (ascetic), by the great good fortune of Shirdi, for the sake of the deliverance of the world, appeared on the banks of the Godavari.

– *Shri Sai Sat Charita*

Back

Experiences of Sai Maharaj

Excerpts from a letter written on 18/2/1920 by Shri Nilkanth Ramchandra Sahasrabuddhe citing his experiences...

(Contd. from March-April, 2007)

One of Sai's hands was wounded. He used to tie a bandage so tightly around it that anyone else would be in unbearable pain. But, He did not give any other treatment to the wound, even though His devotees requested Him to do so. Once, in reply, He said, "There should be a great fire lit up with at least a thousand or two 'Govrya' (dung cakes used as fuel) and then (touching His body) put all this in it and watch the fun from a distance."

Once, when I was in Shirdi, I met a rich old man from Bandra, who had adopted a son. But, he was unhappy with the behaviour of his adopted son and told me at length regarding this. When we left Mumbai, the boy sat in another compartment, since he wanted to smoke. And, instead of getting down at Kopergaon, he went two stations ahead. He returned two hours later by a train coming from Ahmednagar. Even then he did not come near us; but sat elsewhere. When I took the old man for the noon *Aarati*, he followed us; but stood aloof. I did not know then, who the boy was. But, when he bowed to Baba like the rest, Baba immediately spoke of filial duty and so, I asked the old man, if it indeed was his adopted son and he said, yes. After 3-4 days the boy got bored and had thought of quietly leaving in the evening; but before the people dispersed after the *Aarati*, Baba said, "No one should leave without my permission." The boy got scared and revealed, what he had planned to his father. Sages thus practice various types of *Karma Yoga*.

One morning, between 8 and 9 o'clock, Bhausaheb Dixit was meditating after his daily ablutions, when he saw a divine vision of Lord Vitthal. Since he had never seen this Deity before, he had no clue to its identity; but believing that since he had been blessed due to *Sadguru's* grace, Sai Himself would reveal its identity and whereabouts. At the noon *Aarati* Baba asked Bhausaheb, "So Kaka, today Vithoba Patil paid a visit to you?" Bhausaheb was overwhelmed and replied, "Yes." "He keeps moving from place to place and so, tie Him up to a stake!" Baba warned. But, still Bhausaheb was unaware of the whereabouts. Since none of us understood this dialogue, we asked Bhausaheb to elaborate; and he told us the whole story. In the evening a gentleman arrived with some photos of Lord Vitthal of Pandharpur. "That's the Deity!" exclaimed Bhausaheb with his eyes moist. This shows, how Baba cares for the belief and faith of His devotees and His supreme benevolence.

Madhavrao Deshpande was entrusted to take care of all Sai's devotees, who came to Shirdi. But, when Bhausaheb left for Mumbai, not only Madhavrao, but Bapusaheb Jog, Balasaheb Bhate and myself accompanied him to see him off. After he left, some senior officers like the Commissioner of Central Region, Mr. Curtis and his wife, the Collector of Ahmednagar, Mr. McNeill and the Native Assistant of Mr. Curtis, Rao Bahadur Ramchandra Narayan alias Bhausaheb Joglekar were approaching Shirdi. Meanwhile, in the *Masjid*, Baba lifted His '*Kafni*' (mendicant's robe - Baba always wore a loin underneath) and said, "*** have come to see me. But, I am a naked *Fakir*." Those serving in the *Masjid* did not understand Him at all, since there was no new arrival. But, a few minutes later they saw the above mentioned group walking towards the *Chavadi* and truth dawned on them. When they settled in the *Chavadi*, Bhausaheb Joglekar realized that he was acquainted with nobody other than Balasaheb Ghate and so, he sent his peon to call him. Balasaheb did not wish to go and told the peon so. But, when I offered to bring Bhausaheb Joglekar to him and then accompany him to the *Chavadi*, he agreed. Accordingly, when Bhausaheb arrived, we went to the *Chavadi*.

"Tell Baba to finish His morning ablutions soon," suggested Bhausaheb; but I told him, it was nobody's business to do such a thing and convinced Him against it with genuine reasoning. Thinking that perhaps Mr. Curtis would find this behaviour odd, he informed him that Baba and I were childhood friends. Later, they all sat patiently, waiting for Baba to come out of the *Masjid* for '*Bhiksha*' (alms). After a long wait, they saw Baba leaving the *Masjid* and walking towards the *Chavadi*. Immediately Mrs. Curtis went on the road in front of the *Chavadi* and paid her respects to Him in her own and said that she wished to speak a few words with Him. Baba told her to wait for half an hour. When Baba returned after collecting His '*Bhiksha*', Mrs. Curtis once again paid her respects and requested the same. But, Baba told her to wait for another hour and went into the *Masjid*. Later, since Mr. Curtis was in a hurry, they quietly left.

– Shri Sai Leela, Year 1, Volume III,

Jyeshtha, Shaka 1845

Sai Maharaj used to sleep on a plank of wood, which was tied with torn rags and hung from one of the rafters of the *Masjid*. Many people had an intense desire to see Sai Maharaj climb up or down from the plank; but even after hanging around for hours, nobody ever saw Sai climb up or down. Baba could be seen either sitting on the ground or sitting/sleeping on the plank. Oil lamps were lit on either sides of the plank. This ritual went on for many years. Then, one day, Sai broke the plank.

There are many devotees in Shirdi and elsewhere, who are witness to this ritual of the plank.

Once, a religious story-teller, Nanasaheb Chandorkar and two other gentlemen went for *Darshan* of Sai. After *Darshan*, the story-teller was eager to leave early; as he had a story-telling program in Ahmednagar the next day. When Nanasaheb asked Baba's permission, Baba said, "Have your lunch and go !" Nanasaheb requested the story-teller to stay; but he would not agree and left with his friends to reach the station.

Sai then commented to Nanasaheb, "See, how selfish people can be ! When the time comes they leave their friends and stick to their own vested interests. That is why one should choose a friend, who will never ever leave one's side."

Who else, but a *Sadguru* can be such a life-long friend ! So, one should be devoted to a *Sadguru* only. You may love all living things; but only the company of a *Sadguru* will bring real happiness.

As per Sai's wish, Nanasaheb and his friends took leave only after having lunch. Sai said, "There is still some time for the train." When they reached the station, they found that the train was late and the story-teller and his friends were waiting with sour faces for the train. Nanasaheb asked, "Did you miss the train ?" The story-teller replied, "No, the train is three hours late. You did well to listen to Sai Maharaj. We did not and had to go hungry." Later, the train arrived and everyone left for Ahmednagar.

In Shirdi, there lived a man called Appa Kulkarni. He was a great devotee of Sai Baba. Once, he was accused of accepting bribes at the behest of some mischief-makers of the village. When ordered to answer the charge by the Chief Officer of the region, Appa was extremely scared and before going went to take leave of Sai. Baba said, "The Chief Officer is at Nevasa. When you go there, first pay your obeisance to Lord Mohiniraj and then go to answer the Chief."

Appa did as told. The Chief heard him and let him go. "I feel sure, you have not taken any money," he said. Appa danced with joy, singing praises of Sai. Then, he returned to Shirdi and narrated his tale to Sai. Without taking any credit Sai said, "Everything is done by God. He can bring about miracles for His devotees."

One day, Baba told Appa Kulkarni, "Some robbers have entered our village. They will first attack you; so take care ! They are very cunning. They have their sights set on the main booty and they take only that away."

Appa took this advise literally, and locking the government taxes collected by him, he kept vigilant men on guard. But, the robbers indicated by Maharaj were of a different kind. They were the messengers of death or '*Yamdoot*'. A little while after Sai gave the above warning, Appa suffered from vomiting and diarrhoea and died. When he became serious, Appa's wife went to Sai and wept. Sai consoled her and gave her some sage advice.

When a couple of more people died with similar symptoms the next day, the villagers prayed to Baba to take care of them. Sai said, "In all seven people will die and then this epidemic will be no more." As predicted by Baba, seven people died and then the cholera vanished.

There was a carpenter called Kondya in Shirdi, who was a great Sai devotee. One afternoon, Baba said to him, "There is a fire in Khalwadi (threshing ground); so you go there !" It was a hot summer afternoon; but Kondya went running to the threshing ground, only to find that there was no fire anywhere. He returned saying - "There is no fire at all. Why did You make me run in the scorching heat ?" Sai said, "Turn around !" When Kondya turned around, he saw that a stack of hay was on fire and he could see the smoke. Suddenly, a strong wind started blowing and there was an alarm in the village. The villagers thought that, now all the stacks would catch fire causing great damage and so, they pleaded with Baba. Sai reached Khalwadi and poured a ring of water around the burning pile. He said, "Only this pile will burn. Others will remain unharmed." And so it happened.

Nanasaheb Beray worked as an Inspector in the agricultural department. He was a devotee of Sai Maharaj. Once, when he went for Sai's *Darshan*, Sai said, "You go to the station (Kopargaon) immediately ! Do not delay." So, Nanasaheb left quickly. He drove the *tonga* at top speed. There was another *tonga* following him. The gentleman sitting in it said, "There is still time for the train. What's the hurry ? We can take it easy." But, Mr. Beray did not agree and he went quickly to the station. Later, he heard the news that the *tonga*, which was following him was stopped and looted by robbers. They also beat up the passengers. Mr. Beray then realized the importance of Sai's words and kept saying that it was Sai Who saved him.

After reading these experiences of Sai, we can understand His caring for the people. With His *Darshan* and company, people realized that He is the real *Sadguru*. He fulfills all the criteria of a *Sadguru*, as described in the scriptures by the Saints, and complete surrender to Him is the only way to salvation.

It is not possible to describe Sai's attributes or *Leelas* entirely; but a little knowledge of them could serve as guidance. A way to do this is to narrate experiences of His innumerable devotees.

Megha, a Gujarati *Brahmin*, was a great Sai devotee. One day, he was drawing a 'Trishul' (trident) with 'Shendur' (vermillion). When I asked, why, he replied, "Today, when I awoke at dawn and was still in bed, I thought, I heard Baba's voice say - 'Megha, draw a Trishul !' When I looked around, Baba was nowhere and both the doors of our house were bolted. But, the voice was Baba's and there were some 'Akshata' (holy rice grains) on the bed. I got up immediately, went to the *Masjid* and asked Baba, 'Should I draw a Trishul ?' Baba said, 'Yes !' and so, I am drawing this."

The next day, around 10 o'clock, when Megha went to visit Baba, he was given a *Shivlingam*, which Baba had received from some devotee. Baba said, "Take this Megha and worship it daily !" When Megha returned, he showed me the *Shivlingam* and said, "Baba has told me to worship it every day." He was very happy.

To know the reason behind it, lets go back in history.

Megha was serving Rao Bahadur Hari Vinayak Sathe, when he was a Deputy Collector in Kheda district, and it was he who taught him the *Gayatri Mantra*. A few days later Sathe sent him to a Shiva temple to do the daily *Pooja*.

When Sathe became a devotee of Sai Maharaj he built a *Wada* (mansion) in Shirdi for the benefit of the devotees. Sathe thought it apt to keep Megha to serve Sai. Since Megha was a Shiva devotee and thought, Sai to be a Muslim, he was reluctant and dejected, when he came to know of his employer's wishes. But, Sathe convinced him about the true character of Sai. Megha felt better; but not completely convinced. When he first stepped into the *Masjid*, Sai said, "Don't you dare come up. Why have you come to a Muslim ?" But, this was Sai's way of acknowledging Megha, and He was not really angry. Megha stayed in Shirdi for some days and then went home to his village. But, there he missed Sai so much that he soon returned to Shirdi and stayed there for ever.

He thought of Baba as Shiva and kept chanting "Shankar... Shankar"; even referring to Baba as Shankar. Later, a huge picture of Sai was put up in Sathe's *Wada*. Ever since Megha worshipped it daily.

The above incident happened a year later. Before the *Shivlingam* came into Baba's hands, He ordered Megha to draw the *Trishul*, that too not in person, but as a voice heard by Megha. It is indeed amazing; but what is more notable is that Baba kept Megha's faith in Shiva intact.

As Baba's *Aarati* proclaims - "Whatever the faith in one's mind, Baba's grace gives him that experience."

A friend of mine is a lawyer in the High Court. When he first visited Baba, it so happened that only the two of them were present. Baba said, "What should one say ? *Shri Ram Jai Ram Jai Ram !*" When He repeated the words after a few minutes, my friend suddenly remembered that his *Guru* had given him this *Mantra*. Again after some time Baba reiterated His words and my friend realized that Baba was telling him to chant the same *Mantra*, his *Guru* had given him.

Once, when a man from Thane district went to take Baba's *Darshan*, Baba told him to worship Maruti. He did not understand; but when people asked him, if he did worship Maruti, he replied, "Yes. There is a five faced Maruti temple near my house. I do not eat food without doing *Pooja* there." Obviously Baba confirmed his faith in the God, he was worshipping.

There is no separate community or cult established by Baba. He just strengthened the belief of the devotee in his own faith. People from all religions came to Baba; but there is no example of Baba asking to change their original faith. But, if anybody strayed from the royal road, putting him back on the right track was Baba's priority. *Yogabhyasis*, *Karmabhyasis* and *Dnyanabhyasis*, all thronged to Baba and benefitted from His guidance to progress in their subjects.

Once, a good friend of mine went for Sai's *Darshan*. Baba welcomed him with "Come Ramdas !" When I inquired, why Baba called him so, at first he could not cite a reason; but then he realized something and said, "For the last two years I have been doing *Ram Nam Japa*; but nobody, not even my family know about it." Obviously Baba's words pointed towards this.

In Christmas 1909, a doctor went to Shirdi with a friend. The doctor was an orthodox *Brahmin*, who worshipped Lord Ram and was thus reluctant to visit Shirdi, as he did not want to bow down to a Muslim.

But, his friend assured him that not even Baba would ask him to bow.

Thus convinced, the doctor reached Baba's *Masjid* in Shirdi. Lo and behold ! There was no Muslim; but Lord Ram Himself in front of him ! The doctor immediately prostrated in front of Baba. He told his friend about it when he came out.

The next day, the doctor decided that he would neither eat, nor go into the *Masjid* unless Baba blessed him. Thus, for three days, he neither ate, nor went to the *Masjid*. On the fourth day, the doctor's friend suddenly arrived from Khandesh for Sai's *Darshan*. The doctor was so happy to see his friend after 8-9 years, that he went with him to see Baba. As soon as the doctor prostrated before Baba, He said, "Why have you come doctor ? Who called you ?" The doctor remembered his decision, not to visit Baba till blessed and was overwhelmed. Around midnight, the doctor was truly blessed by Sai and he experienced supreme bliss in his sleep. He remained in this condition for 15-20 days, even after he went home.

There are many such experiences of Baba. Once, two of my friends were gossiping in the *Wada*. I was asleep. They were talking late into the night, when they realized that, what they were doing was not good and so went to sleep. The next day, there were many people for Baba's *Darshan*, including these two. When they bowed to do *Namaskar* to Baba, He uttered these words - "All types of people come in this *Darbar*. Good, bad, rogues, evil, cruel - all types. Why should one criticize and gossip about them ?" Of course, my friends learnt their lesson from Baba's comment.

– Shri Sai Leela, Year 1, Volume II,
Jyeshtha, Shaka 1845

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Back

In Sai's Proximity

Mrs. Mugdha Divadkar

CHANDRABHANSHETH

Shri Sai Baba used to visit Dengale brothers at Nimgaon. Similarly, He also followed a practice of visiting Chandrabhansheth Marwari at village Rahata at a distance of 3 kilometers from Shirdi. In those days, Baba went on foot to Rahata. He had a liking for fragrant flowers like *Jaai – Jui* and *Mogra*. While returning from Rahata, He used to bring saplings of these favourite flowers. The plot - where *Sathe Wada* was later on built – was vacant in those days. Baba had planted a beautiful garden at that place with His own hands.

Chandrabhansheth's Saand family, originally belonged to Rajasthan, had now settled down in Rahata. (Reference : Sai Baba – His Divine Glimpses by V. B. Kher). He was known there as a rich *Jamindar*. He had also earned a name in business.

The elder brother of Chandrabhansheth was Ramchandra, while the younger brother was Birjichand. Ramchandrasheth expired in 1857. Chandrabhansheth passed away on 13th December, 1911. Out of the three brothers, it was Chandrabhansheth, who was more inclined towards Baba. Baba also became restless, if He did not visit Rahata.

Such was Baba's love towards Chandrabhansheth, that He had once even decided to move permanently to Rahata. For that purpose, Chandrabhansheth had expressed his eagerness to make '*Pawar Wada*' (owned by him) available for Baba's stay. Later on, for some period, Baba had stayed for sometime in Maruti temple and also in *Chavadi* at Rahata.

Khushalchand – son of Ramchandrasheth and nephew of Chandrabhansheth – was only two – two and half year old, when his father expired. After the demise of Chandrabhansheth, Baba showered same kind of love and affection on Khushalchand. Whenever He so desired, Baba fetched Khushalchand to Shirdi by either sending word for him or by appearing in his dreams.

While describing the affectionate relations and meetings between Baba and Chandrabhansheth, *Chiranjeev Amolakchand* alias Babu - son of Chandrabhansheth - says :

"Baba and Khushalchand met each other at least one in every 8-10 days. If, due to some difficulties, it was not possible for Khushalchand to come to Shirdi, then Baba sent for a *Tonga* either through Tatya Kote or some other devotee and went in it or by foot to Rahata. He first entered Khushalchand's garden, located at the border of the village. From there, a message was sent to Khushalchand's house that Baba is coming. Then, Khushalchand, all the members of his Saand family and other villagers used to gather together to welcome Baba. Ceremoniously Baba was brought to Khushalchand's house. A *Pooja-Archa* was performed. Baba enquired after the family members of Khushalchand and blessed them. If insisted upon, Baba took - at the most – milk and *Roti*. After spending about 30-40 minutes in their company, Baba returned to Shirdi in Khushalchand's *Tonga* or bullock-cart or by foot."

It is true, that love and affection for the Saand family brought Baba to Rahata. However, there was another motive also – that of asking for *Dakshina*.

The real reason for *Dakshina* was to teach *Parmartha* to His devotees. He always said, "Are, it is me, who has to grind the flour for the person, from whom I take *Dakshina*."

Therefore, with the welfare of His devotees in His mind, Baba requested for *Dakshina* – sometimes directly, sometimes by paying visit in their dreams or sometimes from the devotees, who had come for His *Darshan*.

With reference to *Dakshina*, Balasaheb Dev says :

For the purpose of requesting for *Dakshina*, generally Baba did not go out of Shirdi's Dwarkamai. However, the exception was when He visited once or twice in a year for that purpose the residences of two Marwaris at village Rahata at a distance of four – five miles from Shirdi. These Marwaris also responded with warm heart. They led Him by His hands to their house, made him comfortable against bolsters and gave him *Dakshina* to the best of their ability. Baba took it and placed it in His pocket. Thereafter, He made enquiries about all and sundry and then returned to Shirdi. When Baba embarked on His return journey, the villagers of Shirdi took and brought Him back in a procession. Once, I was fortunate – with Baba's blessings – to be able to witness one such procession. I greatly appreciated the good fortune of the Marwari duo."

Wamanrao Prangovind Patel alias Sai Sharananand had the good fortune of being near Sai and he has narrated, how He toiled for His devotees through *Dakshina*.

“Once, after the mid-day *Aarati*, Baba went to Rahata. On knowing this, Bapusaheb Jog enquired, whether I would like to go there. I agreed and the three of us - Bapusaheb, his wife and myself – embarked on the journey in a bullock-cart. On the village border, about a thousand people had gathered to avail of Baba's *Darshan*. They started following Baba. In Khushalchand's *Wada*, Baba settled down on the mattress and rested against bolster. Kakasaheb and others were sitting in front of Him. Khushalchand welcomed Him, placed a plate filled with fruits and performed *Pooja-Archa*. After spending sometime in small talk and taking *Dakshina*, Baba started on His return journey.

Leaving Khushalchand's house, Baba crossed the river and went to the spot, where the bullock-cart was kept. Thereafter, He came to Shirdi in the bullock-cart with Kakasaheb Dixit and Wamanrao Narvekar.

Later on, it was learnt that the real purpose of His visit was to obtain a loan for Wamanrao Narvekar from Khushalbhau.”

Saand family's business was carried under the name and style of 'Shivram Ramchandra Saand & Co.' and continued up to 1928. They had plots of lands at several places totalling about 2,000 acres. They also had handloom factories at Ahmednagar and Bambori and godowns at Ahmednagar. Their money-lending business was well established at Gunjbazar and Ahmednagar. The *hundi* business was going very well at Selu and Jalana in Marathwada and some areas of Nizam's Hyderabad.

It will not be incorrect to say that Baba made use of the wealth of Saand brothers for the welfare of His devotees. And therefore, Baba sometimes acted in this manner – as stated above in the case of Wamanrao Narvekar.

Three days prior to proceeding on His last journey, Baba had visited Khushalchand. Exactly a month after Baba's *Maha-samadhi*, on 15th November 1918, Khushalchand placed his body and soul at the feet of Baba.

After Baba's *Maha-samadhi*, the devotees were divided into two groups – one advocated that as per Baba's wishes His body should be placed in the *Wada*, while the second group vehemently stated that the mortal body should be placed in an open ground and a grave should be built. Khushalchand belonged to the latter group. However, ultimately the events took place as desired by the Almighty.

GOPALRAO GUND

He was the Circle Inspector at Kopargaon. He got attracted towards Baba because of a desire to have a son. Like Nanasaheb Dengale, he also had a religious bent of mind and both had close contact with each other. On Nanasaheb's advice Gopalrao went for Baba's *Darshan*.

Gopalrao had three marriages. However, none of the wives had succeeded in giving him a son. With Baba's blessings a son was delivered in Gopalrao's house. To express his joy and gratitude on the occasion, Gopalrao expressed his desire to repair and renovate the dilapidated *Masjid*. For that purpose, he started gathering stones and other materials. However, Baba had planned to assign this work to another personality – Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Therefore, He did not grant permission to Gopalrao.

Baba, then instructed Gopalrao to use the materials for the renovation and reconstruction of Shani *Mandir* and temples in surrounding areas. Gopalrao was overjoyed. He immediately executed work as per Baba's instructions and not only renovated, but enlarged the Shani *Mandir*. He also repaired the *Guru Samadhi Sthan*, located under the *Neem* tree, under which Baba used to sit.

Gopalrao believed that he had a son through Baba's blessings. To celebrate the occasion, he wanted to arrange a fair (a Hindu *Yatra* or a Muslim *Urus*). He placed his idea before Dada Kote, Taty Kote, Madhavrao Deshpande and others – who immediately supported it. Baba also gave His permission.

It was necessary to obtain permission from the District Collector for the fair. While these people were making efforts for the permission, the Kulkarni of Shirdi opposed the proposal and succeeded in obtaining order prohibiting the *Yatra*. However, as the occasion had blessings of Baba, the villagers once again made attempts to secure the permission with renewed vigor. Their efforts bore fruits and as per Baba's instructions, from *Shake* 1896, a *Yatra* began to be held on the auspicious occasion of Ram Navami.

Thus, Gopalrao was instrumental in establishing the practice of Ram Navami *Yatra*. Taty Patil looked after the arrangements of the *Yatra*.

Later on, Damuanna Kasar was similarly blessed with a son after a long wait. Gopalrao advised Kasar to tie a Flag to the spiral top of the *Masjid*. Kasar placed the idea before Nanasahab Nimonkar, who approved it. Accordingly, he hoisted a Flag.

Till today, on the day of Ram Navami, two new Flags are brought after *Bhajan - Pujan, Wajantri - Taasha* (a kind of musical band) in a ceremonious procession and hoisted and tied to the spiral top of the *Masjid*. Damuanna Kasar's Flag is simple one. The other Flag, bearing golden embroidery, is of Nanasahab Nimonkar. These are made ready at the residence of Kondaji Sutar and then hoisted upon the *Masjid*.

After his demise, Gopalrao donated his stone house to Shirdi Sansthan.

(*contd.*)

– Translated from original Marathi into

English by [Sudhir](#)

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Well organized Shri Ram Navami Festival - 2007 celebrated with great excitement

On behalf of Shree Sai Baba Sansthan Trust (Shirdi), the annual Shri Ram Navami festival was celebrated from Monday, March 26, 2007 to Wednesday, March 28, 2007 at Shirdi with loud chants of Shri Sai Baba's name in a divine atmosphere.

This year more than 60 *Palkhis* (palanquins) from Mumbai - Thane regions came to Shirdi. The Sansthan had provided drinking water, shelter and electricity facilities for all the devotees who came on foot with the *Palkhis*. Emergency medical services were also arranged alongwith. There was a mobile medical service van on the Nasik - Shirdi route. The medical team was provided by the Red Cross Society, Nasik.

The chairman of the Sansthan, legislator Shri Jayant Sasane, trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar, Dr. Eknath Gondkar, Shri Suresh Wabale, executive officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure visited the halting locations of the *Palkhis* at Sinnar, Vavi, Pohegaon and other places and observed the facilities there and welcomed the *Palkhis*. With the arrival of the *Palkhis* in Shirdi, the whole of Shirdi resounded with the chanting of Sai Baba's name.

On the first day of the festival on Monday, March 26 at 5.15 a.m. the *Kakad Aarati* of Shri Sai Baba was done. The *Shobhayatra* (grand procession) of Baba's holy book 'Shri Sai Sat Charita', photo and *Veena* was taken out at 5.45 a.m. Trustees Dr. Eknath Gondkar carried the *Veena*, Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya carried the holy book and Shri Suresh Wabale and Shri Ashok Khambekar carried Sai's photo and participated in the festive procession. After the *Shobhayatra* reached from *Samadhi Mandir* to Dwarkamai at 6 a.m., trustee Mrs. Urmila Jadhav read the first chapter of Shri Sai Sat Charita commencing the *Akhand* (whole) *Parayan* (recital) of it. The second chapter was read by trustee Shri Suresh Wabale, the third chapter by executive officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure's wife Mrs. Sarasvati Wakchaure, the fourth chapter by trustee Dr. Eknath Gondkar, and the fifth chapter by trustee Mrs. Sumitra Kailas Kote. The worship of Sai's feet was performed on this day by trustee Mrs. Sumitra Kailas Kote along with her husband, in the presence of trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar, Dr. Eknath Gondkar, Shri Suresh Wabale, Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya and executive officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure. The programme of the holy bath of Shri Sai was conducted in a divine atmosphere at 6.15 a.m. The *Abhishek* worship was done at 8 a.m. At 8.30 a.m. the public auction of offerings at the feet of Shri Sai in the form of clothes and other things was conducted. The noon *Aarati* was held at 12.30 p.m. After that at 3 p.m. the regular recital of chapters of Shri Sai Sat Charita took place at *Samadhi Mandir*. From 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. the *Kirtan* (devotional rendition) of *Hari Bhakta Parayan* Shri Vilas Renapurkar of Nanded was held. After the *Dhoop Aarati* at 6 p.m., at 8 p.m. a *Kaththak* dance programme by Mrs. Shaila Gulshan Arora of Pune was held on the stage near the *Samadhi Mandir*, and from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. renowned playback singer Sadhana Sargam of Mumbai presented 'Sadhana Sargam Night', a programme of Marathi and Hindi songs on the stage in the grand compound of Sai Nagar. Sai's *Palkhi* was taken in a procession through the village at 9.15 p.m. Shri Nitin Karandikar's (of Korle) Devi Jugai *Dhol Pathak* (drums band) and other local bands participated in the procession with the *Palkhi*. Colourful, sparkling crackers were lit during the procession. Local artistes presented the traditional *Bharud* programme in front of the *Palkhi* when it reached the temple premises. On this day Dwarkamai was kept open throughout the night for *Akhand Parayan*.

Tuesday, March 27 was the second and most important day of the festival. At 5.15 a.m. the *Kakad Aarati* of Shri Sai was performed. After that, at 5.45 a.m. the *Akhand Parayan* concluded. At 6.15 a.m. the *Kaavadi* procession programme got over and the *Abhishek Pooja* of Shri Sai was done after the holy bath of Sai. On this main day the grand procession of Shri Sai's holy book 'Shri Sai Sat Charita', photo and *Veena* was taken out. Trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar carried the *Veena*, Dr. Eknath Gondkar carried the holy book and Shri Pandurang Abhang and Shri Shailesh Kute carried the photo of Sai and participated in the *Shobhayatra*. At 8.30 a.m. the public auction of offerings at the feet of Shri Sai in the form of clothes and other things was conducted. On this day, the chairman, legislator Shri Jayant Sasane along with his wife and vice chairman Shri Shankararao Kolhe performed the worship of Sai's feet. After the worship of the wheat filled sack in the *Samadhi Mandir* by trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar, Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya and Dr. Eknath Gondkar, the sack was taken in a procession to Dwarkamai. The *Kirtan* on the birth of Lord Shri Ram was presented by H.B.P. Shri Mahesh Anant

Athavale of Nanded from 10.30 a.m. to 12 noon. The privileged annual worship this year too by the Shri Rasane and Shri Nimonkar families was done by offering a floral carpet (*Chadar*) and the flags on the *Samadhi*. The noon *Aarati* took place at 12.30 p.m. At 4 p.m. the procession of the flags, and at 5 p.m. the procession of Shri Sai's chariot were taken out through the village. In front of the chariot, *Pavli Nritya*, *Lezim Pathak* (Shirdi), *Zanj Pathak* (Shirdi), *Dhol Pathak* (Korle), *Band Pathak* (Shirdi), *Sanai Choughada Vadan* (Shrirampur, Pune) and others participated in the procession. Dazzling crackers were lit during the procession. After the chariot procession returned, local artistes presented the *Bharud* programme. From 8 p.m. to 11 p.m., '*Hasya Darbar*' - a comedy programme by Navin Prabhakar, Eshan Kureshi, Madan Shukla, Archana Mahajan, Kenith Dias and Himali Shejpal of Mumbai was presented on the stage in the grand compound of Sainagar. The artistes who participated in the programme were felicitated on behalf of the Sansthan by the chairman, legislator Shri Jayant Sasane, trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar, Shri Suresh Wabale and executive officer Shri Bhausaheb Wakchaure. Availing the important day of the festival, the Bhopal-based O.S.S. Aviation Pvt. Ltd. Company showered flowers from a helicopter on the *Samadhi Mandir*, the temple premises and other sacred spots in the temple complex. Artistes performed their programmes from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. the next day in front of Shri Sai. Being the main day of the festival, the temple was kept open throughout the night for *Darshan*.

On the concluding day of the festival on Wednesday, March 28, after the holy bath of Shri Sai at 7.30 a.m., trustee Shri Shailesh Kute performed the worship of Shri Sai's feet. At 8.45 a.m. the *Rudrabhishek* was done by trustee Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya at *Gurusthan*. H.B.P. Shri Vikram Vinayak Nandedkar rendered *Kirtan* of *Gopalkala* from 10.30 a.m. to 12 noon. All the invited *Kirtankars* were felicitated on behalf of the Sansthan by the chairman Shri Jayant Sasane, M.L.A., for presenting melodious devotional *Kirtans* on all the three days of the festival. As per the annual tradition, after the *Kirtan* of *Gopalkala* at 12 noon the breaking of the *Dahi Handi* was done. After that, at 12.15 p.m. the mid-day *Aarati* was done. A '*Nupoornaad*' - *Bharat Natyam* dance programme by Mrs. Swati Daithankar of Pune, was performed from 7.30 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. on the stage near the *Samadhi Mandir*. All the artistes participated in this programme were felicitated on behalf of the Sansthan by trustee Shri Ashok Khambekar and executive officer Shri Bhausaheb Wakchaure. Shri Anil Mohile of Mumbai presented a programme of old Marathi and Hindi songs - '*Yadon ki Baarat*', from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. on the stage in the grand compound of Sainagar. The artistes of this programme were felicitated on behalf of the Sansthan by trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar, Dr. Eknath Gondkar, Shri Suresh Wabale and executive officer Shri Bhausaheb Wakchaure.

The annual wrestling tourney was organized on the occasion of the festival on behalf of the Sansthan and with the co-operation of the Shirdi villagers. The victorious wrestlers were awarded on behalf of the Sansthan.

On the occasion of the festival, a cultural organization of Shirdi '*Kalasampada*', presented the drama '*Vidhikhit*' on Thursday, March 29 at 9.30 p.m. on the stage in the grand compound of Sainagar.

On the occasion of this festival, Dwarkamai *Mandal* of Mumbai erected a massive *Mahadwar* (main entrance gate) measuring 40 feet in height and 60 feet in length in the shape of a fort's replica, at the main entrance of the *Mandap* in the temple compound, a moving mechanical depiction of Baba lighting the lamps with water in Lendibag. These were the main attractions at the festival. The electrical lighting done by this *Mandal* in all the places, including the *Samadhi Mandir* premises, became the cynosure of all eyes.

During the festival, Star News, ND TV, Zee TV, Me - Marathi, Aaj Tak, E TV and others covered the various programmes of the festival and did live telecast.

Under the guidance of executive officer Shri Bhausaheb Wakchaure, all administrative officials, departmental heads and employees strived very hard for the successful conduct of the festival.



Glorious Achievement of Sportspersons of Sansthan's Educational Complex

Students of Shree Sai Baba Sansthan Trust's Educational Complex achieved remarkable success in the field of sports during the academic year 2006-07. These players represented and led Shree Sai Baba Sansthan Trust in chess, volley ball, fencing and other sport tournaments at the taluka, district, regional, state and national levels and earned the distinction of being the leading educational complex in Ahmednagar district in the field of sports.

Winning the gold medal at the 14th All India National Fencing Tournament, Sameer Inamdar, a student of Shri Sai Baba Junior College registered the highest achievement in this academic year. Teams from 23 states in

the country competed in this event. Deepak Phatnani, Siddharth Bhansali and Satish Sahani recorded excellent performances at the state level fencing competition in Chalisgaon.

Similarly, Tanmaya Badhe, Kanhaiya Sahani, Shubham Shivgaje, Akshay Varghude, Pritam Patil, Dharmaveer Sahani and Sandeep Sahani of Sai Baba English Medium School recorded success in the regional and state level chess tournaments.

The under 14 years school volley ball team scored victories in the taluka and district level competitions, and were runners up at the Pune regional level tournament.

Swapnil Jambhulkar, Rakesh Yadav, Akash Varghude and Madhavsingh Rajput exhibited excellent play skills.

Satish Sahani performed excellently well at the five k.m. state level schools' walking tournament in Pune.

Pallavi Jagtap, Shubham Pachpinda, Mahesh Barahate, Prasad Arane, Pramod Kadus scored victories at the state level athletics tournaments in Solapur.

Rakesh Yadav played excellently well at the state level schools' volley ball tournament at Kandivli, Mumbai. He has been selected to play for Maharashtra state in the All India National Schools' volley ball tournament to be held in Mandi, Himachal Pradesh.

For the second consecutive year, the Sai Baba Educational Complex emerged victorious in the Ganesh *Kala Krida Mahotsav* Sports Tournament at Rahata. In all 55 schools in the Rahata region competed in the event.

The chairman of Shree Sai Baba Sansthan Trust, legislator Shri Jayant Sasane, vice-chairman Shri Shankararao Kolhe, the members of the trust, executive officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure, administrative officers Shri Prakash Deshpande, Subhash Jagtap, Prakash Joshi, Eknath Wagh, Ramesh Sabale, Principal Mrs. Z. V. Inamdar and others heartily congratulated the victorious sports students of the school. All these students were guided by Shree Sai Baba Sansthan Trust's sports trainer Shri Rajendra Kohokade.



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