



## Shirdi News

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– Translated by

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## Shri Guru Pournima Festival Celebrations 2007

On behalf of Shree Sai Baba Sansthan, this year too the annual Shri Guru Pournima festival was celebrated from Saturday, July 28, 2007 to Monday July 30, 2007, in an auspicious atmosphere and chanting the name of Sai Baba.

The feel of the Guru Pournima festival is felt first by the *Padayatris* in the *Palkhis* (palanquins) from Pune - Mumbai, nearby places of Shirdi and the band troupes. This year *Palkhis* arrived from Pune - Mumbai, Sangamner, Virar and other places, while band troupes from Pune - Mumbai and other places registered their attendance. Drinking water and lodging arrangements were made at several places for the *Padayatris* by the Sansthan. As soon as the *Palkhis* and band troupes arrived in Shirdi, the Shirdi shrine reverberated with the name of Sai.

On the first day of the festival at 5.15 a.m. on July 28, the *Kakad Aarati* of Shri Sai Baba was done. At 5.45 a.m. the *Shobha Yatra* (festive rally) of Shri Sai's picture, holy book and *Veena* was taken out. Trustees Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya with the *Veena*, Shri Pandurang Abhang with the *Pothi*, Shri Suresh Wabale and Shri Ashok Khambekar with Shri Sai's picture participated in the *Shobha Yatra*. After the *Shobha Yatra* arrived from *Samadhi Mandir* at Dwarkamai at 6 a.m., trustee Shri Pandurang Abhang inaugurated the non-stop reading of the whole Shri Sai Satcharita by reading the first chapter. The second chapter was read by Mrs. Saraswati Wakchaure, the third by Mrs. Shobhatai Gondkar, the fourth chapter was read by trustee and Chairman of the Municipal Council Mrs. Sumitratrai Kailas Kote, the fifth chapter was read by Sai devotee Shri Ravindra Mundada of Hingoli and the balance chapters were read by selected Sai devotees. Mrs. Sumitratrai Kailas Kote alongwith her husband performed the worship of Shri's holy feet in the presence of trustees Dr. Eknath Gondkar, Suresh Wabale, Ashok Khambekar, Krishnachandra Pandeya, Pandurang Abhang and Executive Officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure. At 6.15 a.m. the holy bath of Shri Sai was done in an atmosphere of austerity. At 8.00 a.m. *Abhishek Pooja* was done. At 8.30 a.m. the sacred clothes and things offered to Shri Sai were auctioned in public and sold in the form of *Prasad*. At 12.30 p.m. the afternoon *Aarati* was done. At 3.00 p.m. the regular reading of the chapters was done in the *Samadhi Mandir*. From 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. the *Kirtan* by *Hari Bhakta Parayan* (H.B.P.) Shri Gangadharbua Vyas of Dombivali, Thane took place. At 6.45 p.m. *Dhoop Aarati* was done. From 8.00 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. Shri Vinod Nakhawa of Kalavishkar Kala Pathak of Thane, presented the folk songs and *Koli* dances programme 'Daryaacha Daraara', that awakens the pride of Maharashtra, on a stage beside the *Samadhi Mandir*. The participating artists in the programme were felicitated by the trustee of the Sansthan Shri Ashok Khambekar. At 9.15 p.m. A *Shobha Yatra* of the *Palkhi* of Shri Sai accompanied by the musicians took out from *Samadhi Mandir* to Dwarkamai and from there through Shirdi town. The *Palkhi* was decorated with multi-

coloured fragrant flowers. This eye catching decoration was done meticulously and creatively by Shri Venu Gopal, Shri Sai Annapoorneshwari Trust (Bangalore) and Sant Krishnadas Maharaj Seva Samiti Trust (Mumbai).

The regular *Bhajan Mandals*, the cymbals troupe of Sanmitra Yuvak Mandal, the *Lezim* group of girl students of Shri Sainath Secondary School, outstation bands, Mayur Brass Band of Pune, Shri Sai Banjo Party of Lower Parel, Mumbai, Vishal Band of Chembur, Mumbai, these social-minded troupes participated in the *Shobha Yatra* of the *Palkhi*. Dazzling crackers were lighted along the route of the *Shobha Yatra*. After the *Palkhi* reached the temple premises, Shri Kishore Gagare, Shri Subhash Jakhadi, Shri Jagdish Jakhadi, Shri Prakash Bhalerao, Shri Prakash Shinde and others presented the traditional '*Bharud*' programme. On the occasion of the festival, due to the un-interrupted reading of Shri Sai's sacred book, Dwarkamai was kept open throughout the night.

Sunday, July 29 was the main day of the festival. *Kakad Aarati* took place at 5.15 a.m. The non-stop reading of the holy book on the life of Shri Sai ended at 5.45 a.m. At 6.15 a.m. the holy bath and *Abhishek Pooja* of Shri Sai were done. On this main day, the *Shobha Yatra* of Shri Sai's picture, holy book and *Veena* was taken out. Trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar with the *Veena*, Dr. Eknath Gondkar with the holy book, Shri Shailesh Kute and Shri Suresh Wabale with Sai's picture participated in the *Shobha Yatra*. From the donation of philanthropic, Sai devotee Shri B. Vijay Kumar of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, the top of the temple *Kalash* and the four *Gopurams* (domes) in the vicinity were plated in gold. To commemorate the same on the auspicious occasion of Guru Pournima, the *Pooja* (worship) of the golden *Kalash* was performed by Shri B. Vijay Kumar in the august presence of the Chairman of the Sansthan and Legislator Shri Jayant Sasane, trustees Shri Suresh Wabale, Shri Ashok Khambekar, Shri Pandurang Abhang, Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya, Dr. Eknath Gondkar, Shri Shailesh Kute, Shri Ramakant Karnik, Mrs. Sumitratil Kailas Kote, Executive Officer Shri Bhausaheb Wakchaure and other dignitaries. The worship of Shri Sai's holy feet on this day was performed by the Chairman Shri Jayant Sasane and Mrs. Rajashri Sasane, Vice Chairman Shri Shankarrao Kolhe and the Member of Parliament Shri Balasaheb Vikhe Patil in the gracious presence of trustees Shri Suresh Wabale, Shri Pandurang Abhang, Shri Ramakant Karnik, Shri Ashok Khambekar, Mrs. Sumitratil Kailas Kote and Executive Officer Shri Bhausaheb Wakchaure. At 8.30 a.m. the clothes and things offered to Shri Sai were auctioned and sold in the form of *Prasad*. At 12.30 p.m. the noon *Aarati* was done. From 2.30 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. '*Bhajananjali*' the programme of Sai *Bhajans* (devotional songs) was presented by Shri Prafulla Ganpule and Mrs. Jyotsna Ganpule of Pune. From 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. *H.B.P.* Shri Gangadharbua Vyas presented the *Kirtan*. '*Ek Sham Sai ke Naam*' of Shri Paras Jain of Shirdi was presented between 8.00 p.m. and 10.30 p.m. From 9.30 p.m. to 10.30 p.m. a programme of songs based on devotion to Sai, Grace, Nature and Patriotism was presented by Shri Ravindra Pingale of Yevala. The participating artists were felicitated on behalf of the Sansthan by trustees Shri Ashok Khambekar, Shri Suresh Wabale, and Dr. Eknath Gondkar. At 9.15 p.m. a *Shobha Yatra* of Shri Sai's chariot accompanied by musicians was taken out from *Samadhi mandir* to Dwarkamai and from there through Shirdi town. The decoration of the chariot was breath taking and done with great effort by Shri Ashok Flower Stall of Dadar, Mumbai and Sant Krishnadas Maharaj Seva Samiti Trust.

The regular *Bhajan Mandals*, the cymbals troupe of Sanmitra Yuvak Mandal, the *Lezim* group of girl students of Shri Sainath Secondary School, the outstation troupes, Mayur Brass Band, Shri Sai Banjo Party, Vishal Band, Shri Ganesh Banjo of Mumbai were among the social-minded troupes that participated in the *Shobha Yatra* of the chariot. All these troupes registered their attendance in front of Shri Sai's chariot. Eye catching crackers were burst during the *Shobha Yatra*. After the chariot entered the temple premises, the '*Bharud*' programme was presented in front of the chariot by Shri Kishore Gagare, Shri Vishwanath Gaikwad, Shri Ravi Ranashevare, Shri Subhash Jakhadi, Shri Jagdish Jakhadi, Shri Prakash Bhalerao, Shri Prakash Shinde

and others. Being the main day of the festival, the *Samadhi Mandir* was kept open for *Darshan*, throughout the night. From 11.30 p.m. to 6.00 a.m. artists presented programmes extempore.

On the concluding day of the festival, on Monday, July 30 at 6.00 a.m. the holy bath to Shri Sai was given by sounding sacred musical instruments. After that the worship of Sai's holy feet was performed by Mrs. Sumitratrai Kailas Kote. At 7.30 a.m. *Rudra Abhishek* was done at *Gurusthan* by trustee Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya along with his wife and Mrs. Sumitratrai Kailas Kote. From 10.30 a.m. to noon 12.00 *H.B.P.* Shri Manumaharaj Kokalegaonkar of Parbhani presented the programme of *Gopalkala Kirtan*. In keeping with the annual tradition, at 12.00 noon after the *Gopalkala Kirtan* the *Dahihandi* was broken in the *Samadhi Mandir*. After that at 12.15 p.m. the noon *Aarati* was done. On behalf of the Sansthan, Executive Officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure felicitated *H.B.P.* Shri Manumaharaj Kokalegaonkar and *H.B.P.* Shri Gangadharbua Vyas. From 4.00 p.m. to 6.00 p.m. the classical *Bhajans'* programme was presented on the stage beside the *Samadhi Mandir* by Shri Bhuvanesh Komakali of Devas in Madhya Pradesh. The Sansthan's administrative officer, Shri Prakash Joshi, felicitated the artists, participating in this programme, on behalf of the Sansthan. From 8.00 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. Shri Rajivraj Aditya of New Delhi presented a programme of Sai *Bhajans*. The artists participating in this programme were felicitated on behalf of the Sansthan by trustee Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya and Executive Officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure.

Keeping in mind the huge gathering of devotees, the *Abhishek Poojas* were suspended for the devotees, during the festival period. Only Satyanarayan *Poojas* were on.

Like in the past few years, this year too Sairaj Decorators of Mumbai provided attractive electrical lighting, free of cost, on the *Samadhi Mandir* and the main *Mandap* in the temple premises. On behalf of the Sansthan, administrative officers, Shri Prakash Deshpande and Shri Eknath Wagh, felicitated Shri Hemant Haldankar of Sairaj Decorators and his associates.

The gold plated top (*Kalash*) of the *Samadhi Mandir* and the four domes in the vicinity were the main attraction of this year at the Shri Guru Pournima festival. E-TV, Sahara Samay, Star News, Star Maza, Zee 24 hours and Zee News reached all the religious programmes on Guru Pournima Day, *Aaratis*, chariot and Palkhi's *Shobha Yatras* to innumerable devotees direct to their homes through direct live telecast.

During the festival period Sai devotees were given *Prasad* of sweet lunch.

The festival was successfully conducted with great efforts by all the administrative officials, departmental heads and employees under the able guidance of Executive Officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure.

total cost of Rs, 33,46,200 (Rs.25,74,000 being cost of gold and Rs.7,72,200 labour charges). All this was donated by Shri Vijay Kumar. For undertaking this work, first the earlier paint on the Kalash and the Gopurams had to be completely scraped and removed. After that gold plating (molten) was done.

Shri Vijaykumar desired to complete this work, over a total area of 1287 sq. feet started on July 1, 2007, before the commencement of the Guru Pournima festival. This desire was fulfilled by the **H**aving gold plated the temple *Kalash* and the adjoining *Gopurams* (domes) of Sai Baba's *Samadhi Mandir*, it became the main attraction of this year's *Guru Pournima* festival. The electrical lightings during the night reflected a golden brightness from the *Kalash* and the *Gopurams* that dazzled eyes watching them. The generous donation of philanthropic Sai devotee Shri B. Vijay Kumar of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, that made this unprecedented work possible

will undoubtedly be marked as a very significant milestone in the history of the Sansthan.

The managing committee of the Sansthan consented to this historical task, respecting the request made by Shri Vijay Kumar. He got the gold plating one by Swami Narayan Art Creation, at a round the clock tireless work of the nine employees of Swami Narayan Art Creation.

The work was completed on July 26, 2007 and on July 29, 2007, on the auspicious occasion of Guru Pournima, the worship of the *Kalash* and the *Gopurams* of *Samadhi Mandir* was performed by Mr. and Mrs. Vijay Kumar. The occasion was graced by Chairman of the Sansthan and Legislator Shri Jayant Sasane, trustees Shri Suresh Wabale, Shri Ashok Khambekar, Shri Pandurang Abhang, Shri Krishnachandra Pandeya, Dr. Eknath Gondkar, trustee and Chairman of Municipal Council Mrs. Sumitratrai Kailas Kote, Executive Officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure and other dignitaries.

Shri Vijay Kumar had earlier donated three and half kilos of golden feet of Sai Baba costing Rs. 36 lakhs and an equal weight of golden *Jhaari* (mesh) and vessel for flowers.



## *Satsang Festival in Shirdi on occasion of Adhikmaas*

**T**he *Adhikmaas* (additional month) *Satsang* Festival, organized on behalf of Sai Baba Sansthan Trust (Shirdi) from Thursday, May 17, 2007 to Friday, June 15, 2007, on the occasion of *Adhikmaas*, was celebrated with great enthusiasm in a joyful atmosphere. Several renowned artists presenting *Kirtans*, religious discourses and *Bharuds* were invited to perform at this *Satsang* festival, which was organized daily in two sessions. Thousands of devotees availed the divine revelry of the *Satsang* festival.

*H.B.P.* Shri Jangaleshastri of Dhongargan, *H.B.P.* Shri Shivaji Deshmukh of Nevasa, *H.B.P.* Shri Ramanandgiri Maharaj of Pimpalwadi, *H.B.P.* Shri Paras Mutha of Akolner, *H.B.P.* Shri Mahadeo Raut of Beed, *H.B.P.* Shri Madhav Aajegaonkar of Parbhani and other *Kirtankars* presented programmes of *Kirtans*.

In the second session of the *Satsang* *H.B.P.* Shri Manohar Dikshit of Aurangabad, *H.B.P.* Kumar Prasad Bhagat of Loni, *H.B.P.* Shri Vilas Garware of Satara, *H.B.P.* Shri Sandeep Kelkar of Revdanda, *H.B.P.* Shri Sanjay Vyas of Khandola, Goa, *H.B.P.* Shri Prashant Dhond of Sindhudurg, *H.B.P.* Shri Shriram Zarakar of Akeri, Zarap, *H.B.P.* Shri Narayan Kane of Kavathe, Guland, *H.B.P.* Kumar Shreyas Badave of Pune, *H.B.P.* Kumari Manasi Upadhye of Pune, *Jugalbandi* of *H.B.P.* Kumar Shreyas Badave and *Kumari* Manasi Upadhye, *H.B.P.* Mrs. Leena Kalekar of Kolhapur, *H.B.P.* Shri Madhav Aajegaonkar and other *Narad Kirtan* presenters presented their programmes.

*H.B.P.* Shri Dinkar Anchavale of Varoor presented musical programme and *H.B.P.* Bhagwatacharya Shri Keshav Ukhlikar presented the saga of *Srimad Bhagwat*. During the saga presentation, at the time of Shri Krishna's birth, *Prasad* was distributed to all devotees on behalf of the Sansthan.

Villagers of Shirdi registered their participation in the *Prasad* distribution programme. *H.B.P.* Shri Bhaskarrao Gondkar of Shirdi, Prof. Dr. Narendra Kunte of Solapur, *H.B.P.* Shri Anantashastri Lavar of Rahata, *H.B.P.* Mrs. Jayshree Prayag of Shirdi, Dr. Sayyad Gafoor of Parner, *H.B.P.* Shri Dharmaraj Ufade and discourses of other preachers were presented. And a *Bharud* programme was presented by *Bharud Samrat* Bhanudas Bairagi of Kopargaon.

Children's musical play, 'Tuka Akasha Yevada', produced by Aryadurga Sangeet Varga was presented at the festival. More than 70 artists alongwith the Sansthan's administrative officer Shri Prakash Joshi presented programme of singig various *Bhajans* during the interval between the two sessions. And the troupe of Dr. Murlidharan of Vishakhapatnam presented a programme of Kuchipudi dance. *Bhajan Mandals* from Loni in Pravaranagar, Kolhapur, Aligarh, Nanded and other places also marked their presence on the occasion. Keeping in mind that the festival was to be held during the onset of monsoon a tin roof was erected. The dias in the *Mandap* was equipped with the best loudspeaker system and electrical lighting. On the concluding day of the festival, on behalf of the Sansthan and Sansthan Employees Credit Society with the help of Shirdi villagers, *Prasad* was distributed to all devotees.

The *Satsang* festival was successfully organized with special efforts by the Chairman of the Sansthan Shri Jayant Sasane, Vice Chairman Shri Shankarrao Kolhe, all trustees, Executive Officer Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure, former trustee Shri Shantaram Mirane, all administrative officials and employees.

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### **The re-construction of Gurusthan for the conservation and care of the Neem tree - a testimony of Sai Baba's times**

**“An old lady of Shirdi, Nana Chopdar's mother often talked about the marvel of Baba's life that this fair, generously built and handsome lad, in the beginning, was first sighted, calmly seated in deep meditation under a Neem tree.”** When we read, hear, remember these verses in Shri Sai Satcharita, we mentally start imagining how the very young lad, who did severe penance and yet his face expressed calm emotion, looked like... and the image of that *Gurusthan* in Shirdi flashes in front of our eyes, which was eternally sanctified by Baba's touch and the Neem tree brings memories of the past to light in the present times. That Neem tree has become the place of faith for the innumerable Sai devotees, which He pointed out to the villagers in Shirdi and said, “This is the spot of my *Guru*,” where Sai Baba first manifested in Shirdi. The leaves of this Neem tree are not bitter like that of other Neem trees. Earlier, the idol of Baba, replicas of His holy feet, Shiv *Linga* and Nandi's idol was consecrated beside the trunk of this Neem tree. In order to enable easy *Darshan* and *Pradakshina* (going round) of the Neem tree and to ensure protection of devotees from rain and sun, a temple was constructed around the Neem tree. During this construction concreting was done beside the trunk of this Neem tree and a fixed distance from its base. But, with the constant growth of the tree, the trunk and base also expanded and got wholly entangled in the concrete. Thereby causing pain to the tree and thwarting further growth. It was, therefore, essential to conserve and care for the centre of faith of innumerable Sai devotees. With this in mind, the guidance of renowned archeologist *Padmashri* Dr. Sadashivrao Gorakhshkar of Mumbai, senior research scientist of Institute of Genetics and Tree Breeding of Coimbatore Dr. S. Murugesan and scientist of Forest Research Institute of Dehradun in Uttaranchal Dr. Subhash Natiyal and Dr. N. S. K. Harish, was sought. These experts came to Shirdi and physically examined the *Gurusthan* temple and Neem tree and tested the samples of the bark of the Neem tree and leaves, in the laboratory. After the testing, the experts placed the report of their findings as follows -

1. The skin (bark) of the Neem tree was breaking due to the concreting and flooring around the tree. Thus affecting the supply of nutrition prepared by the leaves to the roots and the supply of nutrition and water from the roots to the leaves and other processes, which was affecting and thwarting the growth of the tree.

2. The roots were denied fresh air due to the flooring around the base of the tree, due to which there was no balanced supply of water and air.

3. Due to complete concretization around the tree, no water could seep in from anywhere.

4. If the place near the tree is left open, then the capacity of the functioning of the roots will increase.

5. The constant growth of the tree resulted in the iron netting around the tree piercing into the bark of the tree causing great pain.

6. Even the roof of the temple caused damage to the tree.

Taking into account the above report of the experts and the faith of the innumerable Sai devotees on the tree, the Chairman of the Sansthan and Legislator Shri Jayant Sasane, Vice Chairman Shri Shankarrao Kolhe and all the trustees, mutually discussed the issue of conservation and care of this Neem tree and decided to completely remove all the concreting around the Neem tree and the *Gurusthan* temple. Accordingly all the concreting around the *Gurusthan* temple and the Neem tree was immediately removed and the trunk and the whole tree was kept open. Sai devotees welcome expressed heartfelt gratitude at the right decision taken by the management committee and the prompt action.

The managing committee of the Sansthan, alongwith, decided to reconstruct a small temple at the original spot so that Sai devotees can avail *Darshan* of the sacred location of Baba's *Gurusthan*. Accordingly a small temple was erected at that spot at a cost of Rs. 2,51,000/-. The whole temple has been constructed with pre-carved stones.

The idol of Baba, replicas of Baba's feet, Mahadeva's *Linga*, Nandi and other items from the old temple were installed in this newly constructed temple on Thursday, July 19, 2007 at 7 a.m. by the Executive Officer of the Sansthan, Shri Bhausahab Wakchaure and his wife Mrs. Saraswati Wakchaure, amidst the chanting of Ganeshasmaran, the main prayers performing *Vaidic* worship. Trustee of the Sansthan Dr. Eknath Gondkar, trustee and Chairman of the Municipal Council Mrs. Sumitratai Kailas Kote and other dignitaries were present on the occasion. During the installation ceremony the priest of the Sansthan V.S.S. Shri B. R. Joshi alongwith seven priests conducted the *Matruka Poojan*, Nandi *Shraddh*, *Dikrakshan*, *Panchgavyakaran*, *Kundastha Devta Poojan*, *Agnisthapan*, *Navgrahasthapan*, *Chaturlinga-tobhadra*, *Vastupeeth*, *Kshetrapal*, *Yogini*, *Rudrakalash* and other *Peeth* Deities consecration, worship, *Moortisnapan*, *Prasadsnapan*, *Prasadastha Devata Poojan*, *Peethastha Devata Havan*, main Deity *Havan*, idols (*Linga*, Nandi, feet) installation, *Rudrabhishek*, *Mahapooja*, *Uttarapoojan*, *Sthapit Devata Balidan*, *Poornahuti* and *Aarati* with *Vaidic* rites were done to re-install the temple.

To facilitate the convenient *Pradakshina* of the Neem tree by the devotees a platform of pre-carved stones will be erected around which decorative railings will be made. Further to enable devotees to squat for a few moments in front of the temple, a roof shelter will be provided over the *Dhuni* in front of the temple.



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