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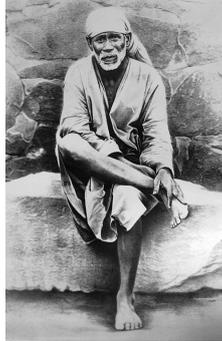
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Sai Baba of Shirdi

Sai Baba of Shirdi



Sai Baba of Shirdi

Full name	Sai Baba of Shirdi
Born	Unknown
Died	October 15, 1918 (c. age 81)
Era	20th Century
Region	India
School	Hinduism (Advaita Vedanta) and Islam (Sufism)

Sai Baba of Shirdi (27 September 1837 – October 15, 1918), also known as **Shirdi Sai Baba** (Marathi: शिर्डीचे श्री साईबाबा, Urdu: (اباب لایئاس یدرش), was an Indian guru, yogi, and fakir who is regarded by his Hindu and Muslim devotees as a saint. Hindu devotees consider him an incarnation of Lord Dattatreya. Many devotees believe that he was a Satguru, an enlightened Sufi Pir (Urdu: پی), or a Qutub. He is a well-known figure in many parts of the world, but especially in India, where he is much revered.

Sai Baba's real name is unknown. The name "Sai" is given to him upon his arrival at Shirdi. No information is available regarding his birth and place of birth. Sai baba never spoke about his past life. *Sāī* is of Sanskrit origin, meaning "Sakshat Eshwar" or the *divine*. The honorific "Baba" means "father; grandfather; old man; sir" in Indo-Aryan languages. Thus Sai Baba denotes "holy father" or "saintly father".^[1]

He was born in a Hindu family and was adopted by a Muslim family who raised him up till 16 years old. After which, he went as a sannyasi to Shirdi and made it his permanent home.

Sai Baba had no love for perishable things and his sole concern was self-realization. He remains a very popular saint,^[2] and is worshipped by people around the world. He taught a moral code of love, forgiveness, helping others, charity, contentment, inner peace, and devotion to God and guru. Sai Baba's teaching combined elements of Hinduism and Islam: he gave the Hindu name *Dwarakamayi* to the mosque he lived in,^[3] practiced Hindu and Muslim rituals, taught using words and figures that drew from both traditions, and was buried in a Hindu temple in Shirdi. One of his well known epigrams, "*Sabka Malik Ek*" ("One God governs all"), is associated with Islam and Sufism. He always uttered "*Allah Malik*" ("God is King").

The many of his practices point more to him believing in the unity of God, reciting Al-Fatiha and other Qur'anic readings at Muslim festival times,^[4] listening to *hamds* and *qawwali* twice daily,^[5] practicing Salah (Namaz), wearing clothing reminiscent of a Sufi fakir, omnivore and abstaining from alcohol. A mosque still stands in Shirdi, a place in which he once lived and continued to visit regularly. According to Purdom, when Kulkarni Maharaj requested Upasni Maharaj to pay a visit to Sai Baba, Upasni replied 'Why should I go to a Muslim?'^[6]

Sai Baba is revered by several notable Hindu religious leaders. Some of his disciples became famous as spiritual figures and saints, such as Mhalsapati, a priest of Kandoba temple in Shirdi, Upasni Maharaj, Saint Bidkar Maharaj, Saint Gangagir, Saint Jankidas Maharaj, and Sati Godavari Mataji.^{[7] [8]}

Early years

Little has been documented on the early life of Shirdi Sai Baba. Some of the possible accounts of his early life are as follows:

1) Sai Baba of Shirdi was born in a remote village called Pathri in Maharashtra on September 28, 1835 to the couple, Gangabhavadiya and Devagiriamma. Gangabhavadiya, overcome with a feeling of intense renunciation immediately after the child's birth, decided to retire into a forest. With Devagiriamma religiously following her husband, the newborn was left in nature's care. A pious Muslim and his wife took care of the abandoned child till He was four years of age. Then they handed Him over to a spiritual master by name Gopalrao Deshmukh (also known as Venkusa). For 12 years, till 1851, Baba stayed in Sri Venkusa's ashram. One night in 1851, for the first time, Baba came to Shirdi. However, He left after a two month stay. He returned to Shirdi again in 1858 and stayed there for 60 long years.^[9]

2) Baba reportedly arrived at the village of Shirdi in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, British India, when he was about 16 years old. It is generally accepted that Sai Baba stayed in Shirdi for three years, disappeared for a year, and returned permanently around 1858.^[10]

Return to Shirdi

In 1858 Sai Baba returned to Shirdi. Around this time he adopted his famous style of dress consisting of a knee-length one-piece robe (kafni) and a cloth cap. Ramgir Bua, a devotee, testified that Sai Baba was dressed like an athlete and sported 'long hair flowing down to the end of his spine' when he arrived in Shirdi, and that he never had his head shaved. It was only after Baba forfeited a wrestling match with one Mohdin Tamboli that he took up the kafni and cloth cap, articles of typical Sufi clothing.^[11] This attire contributed to Baba's identification as a Muslim fakir, and was a reason for initial indifference and hostility against him in a predominantly Hindu village.^[12] According to B.V. Narasimhaswami, a posthumous follower who was widely praised as Sai Baba's "apostle", this attitude was prevalent up to 1954 even among some of his devotees in Shirdi.^[13]

For four to five years Baba lived under a neem tree, and often wandered for long periods in the jungle around Shirdi. His manner was said to be withdrawn and uncommunicative as he undertook long periods of meditation.^[14] The *Shri Sai Satcharita* recounts the reaction of the villagers:

The people of the village were wonder-struck to see such a young lad practicing hard penance, not minding heat or cold. By day he associated with no one, by night he was afraid of nobody.^[15]

He was eventually persuaded to take up residence in an old and dilapidated mosque and lived a solitary life there, surviving by begging for alms, and receiving itinerant Hindu or Muslim visitors. In the mosque he maintained a sacred fire which is referred to as a dhuni, from which he gave sacred ashes ('Udhi') to his guests before they left. The ash was believed to have healing and apotropaic powers. He performed the function of a local hakim, and treated the sick by application of ashes. Sai Baba also delivered spiritual teachings to his visitors, recommending the reading of sacred Hindu texts along with the Qur'an. He insisted on the indispensability of the unbroken remembrance of God's name (dhikr, japa), and often expressed himself in a cryptic manner with the use of parables, symbols and allegories.^[16]

Sai Baba participated in religious festivals and was also in the habit of preparing food for his visitors, which he distributed to them as prasad. Sai Baba's entertainment was dancing and singing religious songs. His behavior was sometimes uncouth and violent.^{[17] [18]}

After 1910 Sai Baba's fame began to spread in Mumbai. Numerous people started visiting him, because they regarded him as a saint with the power of performing miracles, or even as an Avatar.^[19] They built his first temple at Bhivpuri, Karjat.^[20]

Teachings and practices

Sai Baba opposed all persecution based on religion or caste. He was an opponent of religious orthodoxy - Christian, Hindu and Muslim.^[21] Although Sai Baba himself led the life of an ascetic, he advised his followers to lead an ordinary family life. Sai Baba encouraged his devotees to pray, chant God's name, and read holy scriptures. He told Muslims to study the Qur'an, and Hindus to study texts such as the Ramayana, Vishnu Sahasranam, Bhagavad Gita, and Yoga Vasistha.^[22] He advised his devotees and followers to lead a moral life, help others, love every living being without any discrimination, and develop two important features of character: faith (*Shraddha*) and patience (*Saburi*). He criticized atheism.^[23] In his teachings, Sai Baba emphasized the importance of performing one's duties without attachment to earthly matters, and of being content regardless of the situation.

Sai Baba interpreted the religious texts of both Islam and Hinduism. He explained the meaning of the Hindu scriptures in the spirit of Advaita Vedanta. His philosophy also had numerous elements of bhakti. The three main Hindu spiritual paths - Bhakti Yoga, Jnana Yoga, and Karma Yoga - influenced his teachings.^[24]

Sai Baba said that God penetrates every thing and every being. He emphasized the complete oneness of God which was very close to the Islamic tawhid and the Hindu doctrine of the Upanishads. Sai Baba said that the world is transient, and that only God and his gifts are eternal. He emphasized the importance of devotion to God - bhakti - and surrender to his will. He also talked about the need of faith and devotion to one's spiritual guru. He said that everyone was the soul and not the body. He advised his followers to develop a virtuous character, and taught them that all fate was determined by karma.

Sai Baba left no written works. His teachings were typically short, pithy sayings rather than elaborate discourses. Sai Baba would ask his followers for money (dakshina), some of which he would give to the poor and other devotees the same day, and the rest was used to buy wood to maintain Dhuni. According to his followers, this was done to rid them of greed and material attachment.

Sai Baba encouraged charity, and stressed the importance of sharing. He said: "Unless there is some relationship or connection, nobody goes anywhere. If any men or creatures come to you, do not discourteously drive them away, but receive them well and treat them with due respect. Shri Hari (God) will certainly be pleased if you give water to the thirsty, bread to the hungry, clothes to the naked, and your verandah to strangers for sitting and resting. If anybody wants any money from you and you are not inclined to give, do not give, but do not bark at him like a dog."^[25] Other favorite sayings of his were: "Why do you fear when I am here", and "He has no beginning... He has no end."^[26]



Shirdi Sai Baba, leaning against the wall of his masjid, with devotees

Sai Baba made eleven assurances to his devotees:

1. Whosoever puts their feet on Shirdi soil, their sufferings will come to an end.
2. The wretched and miserable will rise to joy and happiness as soon as they climb the steps of the mosque Dwarakamayi.
3. I shall be ever active and vigorous even after leaving this earthly body.
4. My tomb shall bless and speak to the needs of my devotees.
5. I shall be active and vigorous even from my tomb.
6. My mortal remains will speak from my tomb.
7. I am ever living to help and guide all who come to me, who surrender to me, and who seek refuge in me.
8. If you look at me, I look at you.
9. If you cast your burden on me, I shall surely bear it.
10. If you seek my advice and help, it shall be given to you at once.
11. There shall be no want in the house of my devotee.
12. If you take a step towards me, I will take 100 steps towards you



Sai Baba (1918)

Worship and devotees

The Shirdi Sai Baba movement began in the 19th century, while he was living in Shirdi. A local Khandoba priest - Mhalsapati Nagre - is believed to have been his first devotee. In the 19th century Sai Baba's followers were only a small group of Shirdi inhabitants and a few people from other parts of India. The movement started developing in the 20th century, with Sai Baba's message reaching the whole of India.^[2] During his life, Hindus worshiped him with Hindu rituals and Muslims considered him to be a saint. In the last years of Sai Baba's life, Christians and Zoroastrians started joining the Shirdi Sai Baba movement.^[2]

Shirdi is among the major Hindu places of pilgrimage.^[27] The first Sai Baba temple is situated at Bhivpuri, Karjat. The Sai Baba Mandir (Hindu temple) in Shirdi is visited by around twenty thousand pilgrims a day and during religious festivals this number can reach up to a hundred thousand.^[28] Shirdi Sai Baba is especially revered and worshiped in the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Gujarat.

The Shirdi Sai movement has spread to the Caribbean and to countries such as the United States, Australia, Malaysia, and Singapore. The Shirdi Sai Baba movement is one of the main Hindu religious movements in English-speaking countries.^[29]

Sai Baba had many disciples and devotees:

1. Nana Saheb Chandorkar: Deputy Collector – legend has it that Sai Baba saved this man's daughter from labor complications.
2. Ganapath Rao: police constable who resigned to become an ascetic, and also known as DasGanu, He was an itinerant who spread Sai Baba's message.
3. Tatya Patil: had immense faith in Sai Baba and served him until Sai Baba took samadhi. He is also known to be Sai Baba's younger brother.
4. Baija Mai kote patil: Sai Baba treated her as his mother. She was Tatya Patil's mother.
5. Haji Abdul baba: He served Sai Baba until Sai Baba died in 1918.
6. Madhav Rao Deshpande: Later known as Shama, one of the staunch devotees of Sai Baba.

7. Govindrao Raghunath Dabholkar (Hemadpant): Sai Baba allowed him to write the *Shri Sai Satcharita*.
8. Mahalsapati Chimanji Nagare : A priest of Khandoba Temple.

108 Shirdi Sai Baba Slogans(Mantras) are sung by Devotees in praise of him as worship:

See the complete list(Main article): [108_Shirdi_Sai_Baba_Slogans_in_Tamil](#)

Reported miracles

Sai Baba's millions of disciples and devotees believe that he performed many miracles such as bilocation, levitation, mindreading, materialization, exorcisms, making the river Yamuna, entering a state of Samādhi at will, and lightning lamps with water, removing his limbs or intestines and sticking them back to his body (*Khanda Yoga*), curing the incurably sick, appearing beaten when another was beaten, appearing in the flesh after death, preventing a mosque from falling down on people, and helping his devotees in a miraculous way.^[30]

According to his followers he appeared to them in dreams after his death, and gave them advice. His devotees have documented many stories.^[31]

Historical sources

Biographers of Sai Baba (e.g. Govindrao Raghunath Dabholkar, Acharya Ekkirala Bharadwaja, Smriti Srinivas, Antonio Rigopolous) have based their writing on primary sources. One such source is the *Shirdi Diary* by Ganesh Shrikrishna Khaparde, which describes every day of the author's stay at Shirdi.

Speculation about the unknown episodes of Sai Baba's life are primarily based on his own words.

The most important source about Sai's life is the *Shri Sai Satcharita*, written in Marathi in 1916 by Govindrao Raghunath Dabholkar, whom Sai Baba nicknamed *Hemadpant*. Consisting of 53 chapters, it describes Sai Baba's life, teachings, and miracles. The book compares Sai Baba's love to a mother's love: caring and loving, but reprimanding when needed. It describes Baba's lifestyle, his selfless attitude, and his love for his devotees. The book describes how one should surrender one's egoism at God's feet and trust one's guru. It explains how God is supreme and His devotees should trust Him and love Him. It teaches that God is omnipresent in all living things, so that everything on Earth must be treated with love and respect.

Sri Sai Baba and His Teachings by Acharya Ekkirala Bharadwaja is an in-depth study of Sai Baba's life routine and activities. B.V. Narasimhaswamiji has written important books such as *Sri Sai Baba's Charters and Sayings* and *Devotee's Experiences of Sai Baba*.

In various religions

Hinduism

During Sai Baba's life, the Hindu saint Anandanath of Yewala declared Sai Baba a spiritual "diamond".^[32] Another saint, Gangagir, called him a "jewel".^[32] Sri Beedkar Maharaj greatly revered Sai Baba, and in 1873, when he met him he bestowed the title Jagad guru upon him.^[33] ^[34] Sai Baba was also greatly respected by Vasudevananda Saraswati (known as Tembye Swami).^[35] He was also revered by a group of Shaivite yogis, to which he belonged, known as the *Nath-Panchayat*.^[36]

Other religions

In Islam, Sai Baba mainly appears in Sufism as a Pir. Meher Baba declared Baba to be a *Qutub-e-Irshad* - the highest of the five Qutubs, a "Master of the Universe" in the spiritual hierarchy.^[37] Sai Baba is also worshipped by prominent Zoroastrians such as Nanabhoy Palkhivala and Homi Bhabha, and has been cited as the Zoroastrians' most popular non-Zoroastrian religious figure.^[38]

Meher Baba met Sai Baba only once in his lifetime, during World War I, in December 1915. Meher Baba was still a youngster named Merwan Sheriar Irani when he met Sai Baba for a few minutes during one of Sai Baba's processions in Shirdi. This event is considered as the most significant in Meher Baba's life. *Shri Sai Satcharita* (Sai Baba's life story), makes no mention of Meher Baba. But in *Lord Meher*, the life story of Meher Baba, there are innumerable references to Sai Baba.^[39] Meher Baba credited his Avataraic advent to Upasni, Sai Baba, and three other Perfect Masters – Hazrat Babajan, Hazrat Tajuddin Baba, and Narayan Maharaj.

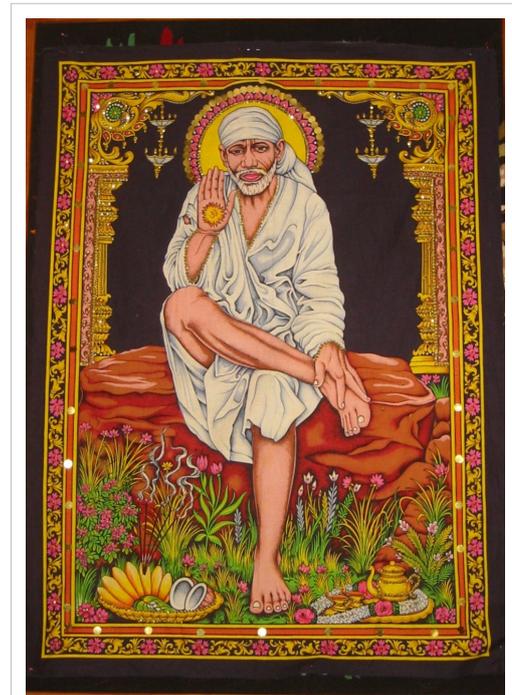
Notable disciple

Sai Baba left behind no spiritual heirs and appointed no disciples, and did not even provide formal initiation (diksha), despite requests. Some disciples of Sai Baba achieved fame as spiritual figures, such as Upasni Maharaj of Sakori. After Sai Baba took Mahasamadhi, his devotees offered the daily Aarti to Upasani Maharaj when he paid a visit to Shirdi, two times within 10 years.^[39]

In culture

Sacred art and architecture

In India, it's a common sight to find a Sai Baba temple in any city or town, in every large city or town there is at least one temple dedicated to Sai Baba.^[2] There are even some in towns and cities outside India. In the mosque in Shirdi in which Sai Baba lived, there is a life-size portrait of him by Shama Rao Jaykar, an artist from Mumbai. Numerous monuments and statues depicting Sai Baba, which serve a religious function, have also been made. One of them, made of marble by a sculptor named Balaji Vasant Talim, is in the Samadhi Mandir in Shirdi where Sai Baba was buried.^[40] In Sai Baba temples, his devotees play various kinds of devotional religious music, such as aarti.^[41]



Sai Baba depicted on a tapestry

Stamp

Indian Postal Service released a Sai Baba commemorative stamp in May 2008.^[42]

On July 30, 2009, the New and Renewable Energy Minister Farooq Abdullah inaugurated what has been acclaimed as the largest solar steam system in the world, at the Shirdi shrine. The Shri Sai Baba Sansthan Trust paid an estimated Rs.1.33 crore for the system, Rs.58.4 lakh of which was paid as a subsidy by the renewable energy ministry. It is said the system can cook 20,000 meals per day for pilgrims visiting the temple.^{[43] [44] [45]}

Film and television

Sai Baba has been the subject of several feature films in many languages produced by India's film industry.

Year	Film	Title role	Director	Language	Notes
1977	<i>Shirdi ke Sai Baba</i>	Sudhir Dalvi	Ashok V. Bhushan	Hindi	Also featuring Manoj Kumar, Rajendra Kumar, Hema Malini, Shatrughan Sinha, Sachin, Prem Nath
1986	<i>Sri Shirdi Saibaba Mahathyam</i>	Vijayachander	K. Vasu	Telugu	Dubbed into Hindi as <i>Shirdi Sai Baba Ki Kahani</i> , into Tamil as <i>Sri Shirdi Saibaba</i>
1989	<i>Bhagavan Shri Sai Baba</i>	Sai prakash	Sai prakash	Kannada	
1993	<i>Sai Baba</i>	Yashwant Dutt	Babasaheb S. Fattelal	Marathi	Also featuring Lalita Pawar
2001	<i>Shirdi Sai Baba</i>	Sudhir Dalvi	Deepak Balraj Vij	Hindi	Also featuring Dharmendra, Rohini Hattangadi, Suresh Oberoi
2005	<i>Ishwarya Avatar Sai Baba</i>	Mukul Nag	Ramanand Sagar	Hindi	Composite movie drawn from Sagar's <i>Sai Baba (TV series)</i> .
2010	<i>Malik Ek</i>	Jackie Shroff	Deepak Balraj Vij	Hindi	Expected release in 2008. Also featuring Manoj Kumar, Divya Dutta, Rohini Hattangadi, Zarina Wahab and Anup Jalota as Das Ganu.

- In the popular Hindi film Amar Akbar Anthony (1977), Rishi Kapoor playing the Muslim character Akbar sings "Shirdi Wale Sai Baba" in a temple. Laxmikant Pyarelal composed the music, Anand Bakshi wrote the lyrics, and Mohammed Rafi was the singer. The song became a hit and is still played today.
- The Hindi language historical drama series *Shirdi Ka Sai Baba*, with 31-year old Mukul Nag in the title role, was produced by Sagar Films and broadcast by Star Plus in 2006.^[46]
- A TV series on Sai Baba by Prof. C.V. Vijendra is shown on Star TV network every Sunday at 8:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. in Hyderabad.
- A movie about Sai Baba, named *Guru Poornima*, was released in the Telugu language.

A TV series on Mahan: Shirdi Sai Baba is shown on Vijay TV from Monday to Friday at 6.30pm since Feb 2011

Death

Sai Baba died on October 15, 1918 (aged 83). Just prior to His shedding the mortal coil in 1918, He told some of His devotees that He would reappear in the Madras Presidency in 8 years time. Sri Sathya Sai Baba, born in 1926, declared that He was Shirdi Baba come again. ^[47]

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- [12] Rigopoulos, Antonio (1993). *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*. SUNY. pp. 51–52. ISBN 0791412687.
- [13] Narasimhaswami, B.V. (1990). *Life of Sai Baba (Vol. 1)*. Madras: All-India Sai Samaj. p. 24.: "One very closely associated devotee of his, now living, still believes that Baba was 'only a Mohammadan.' What can 'only a Mohammadan' mean? It means that even after 25 years of personal experience of him and 36 years of his *post mortem* glories, the devotee treats him as a communalist just as he did when Baba was in the flesh."
Narasimhaswami, B.V. (1990). *Life of Sai Baba (Vol. 1)*. Madras: All-India Sai Samaj. pp. 24–25.: "Baba wished to convince the devotee, if he was a Hindu, that he was Mahavishnu, Lakshminarayan, etc., and he bade water flow from his feet as Ganga issued from Mahavishnu's feet. The devotee saw it and praised him as 'Rama Vara', but as for the water coming from his feet, that devotee simply sprinkled a few drops on his head and would not drink it coming as it did from a Mohammadan's feet. So great was the prejudice of ages that even one, who thought of him as Vishnu, thought he was a 'Muslim Vishnu'. Prejudices die hard and the devotee wondered and wonders how people can believe that Baba was a Brahmin and that his parents were Brahmins when he had lived all his life in a mosque and when he was believed to be a Muslim."
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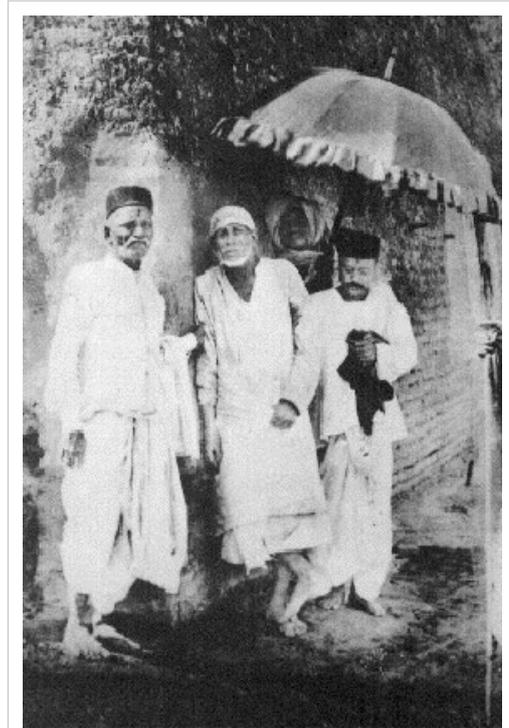
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Shirdi Sai Baba movement

The **Shirdi Sai Baba movement** is the religious movement of the followers and devotees of the 19th- and early 20th-century Indian saint Sai Baba of Shirdi (or Shirdi Sai Baba).

History

The Shirdi Sai Baba movement began in the 19th century, during Sai Baba's life, while he was staying in Shirdi, India. A local Khandoba priest named Mahalsapathy is believed to have been his first devotee. However, in the nineteenth century Sai Baba's followers were only a small group of Shirdi inhabitants and a few people from other parts of India. It started developing in the 20th century and even faster in 1910 with the Sankirtans of Das Ganu (one of Sai's devotees) who spread Sai Baba's fame to the whole of India. Since 1910 numerous Hindus and Muslims from all parts of India started coming to Shirdi. During Sai's life Hindus worshipped him with Hindu rituals and Muslims revered him greatly, considering him to be a saint. Later (in the last years of Sai Baba's life) Christians and Zoroastrians started joining the Shirdi Sai movement.



Shirdi Sai Baba with disciples

Chandra Bhanu Satpathy, a devotee of Sai Baba, has been instrumental in creating more than one hundred and fifty temples of Shirdi Sai Baba in India and abroad. He has also had an important role in the development and propagation of the Shirdi Sai Baba movement.

The devotees of Shirdi Sai Baba have spread all over India. According to the *Gale Encyclopedia of Religion* there is at least one Sai Baba mandir in nearly every Indian city. His image is quite popular in India. Some prominent non-religious publishing houses (such as Sterling Publishers) have also published books about Shirdi Sai written by his devotees. According to the book *Modern World Religions: Hinduism - Pupil Book Core* Shirdi is among the major Hindu places of pilgrimage. According to estimates the Sai mandir in Shirdi is visited by around forty thousand pilgrims a day and during religious festivals this number amounts to a hundred thousand.

Beyond India the Shirdi Sai movement has spread to other countries such as the USA and the Caribbean. Sai Baba mandirs and organisations of his devotees have been built in countries including Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and the USA. According to the book *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States* the Shirdi Sai Baba movement is one of the main Hindu religious movements in English speaking countries.

The Shirdi Sai Baba movement has developed mainly thanks to the Shri Saibaba Sansthan and other organisations of his devotees such as the All India Sai Samaj, authors of publications about Sai such as B. V. Narasimhaswamiji, Swami Sai Sharananand, Guruji C. B. Satpathy, as well as numerous mandirs dedicated to Sai Baba.

Much of the Shirdi Sai Baba movement started because of the diligent work of H.H. Shri B.V.Narasimha Swamiji of Chennai who went to Shirdi 12 years after the Mahasamadhi of Shirdi Sai Baba. Later Shree B.V.Narasimha Swamiji started the all India Sai Samaj and built a beautiful temple in Mylapore Chennai just like the Samadhi mandir in Shirdi. This happens to be the first Sai Baba temple built in South India. His disciple H.H.Radhakrishna Swamiji came to Bangalore and built the beautiful Shirdi Sai centre in Bangalore. Also, H.H. Swami Sai Sharanandji built the beautiful temple of Shirdi Sai Baba at Ahmedabad. These saints were themselves considered realized beings and are being worshipped and revered by many people and are often called the apostles of Shirdi Sai Baba. One can find their pictures in the samadhi mandir at Shirdi. Much of the Sai movement owes much to their diligent effort.

Beliefs

Many members of the Shirdi Sai Baba movement consider him to be an avatar of Shiva and Dattatreya, a saint as well as a sadguru. They believe in the miracles he performed when he was alive and which he will continue performing despite not being physically present. Many followers and devotees of Sai Baba think that such a great saint seldom appears on Earth.

Among Sai's devotees the belief that he is the next incarnation of Kabir (which is based mainly on his own words) is quite common. Some of them also believe that he and Akkalkot Maharaj are the same soul who came to Earth in two different bodies.

Practices

The practices that Shirdi Sai Baba's devotees use to worship him are mainly traditional Hindu practices such as puja, ritual washing of his images, singing and repeating his name, worshipping his feet (which is a common practice in Hinduism) going on pilgrimage to Shirdi, singing arati or reciting a mantra (Om Sai Shri Sai Jaya Jaya Sai). The anniversary of Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi is an important festival for them. Guru poornima is another auspicious day celebrated by sai devotees. It is told that Brahma gnyan can't be achieved without a guru's help. Hence baba paid highest importance to guru parampara and guru worship. Sai is worshipped by people of many religions.

The Sai Baba mandir in Shirdi is active and every day worship of Sai is conducted in it, including aartis. Pilgrims visit Shirdi every day. Shirdi Baba is especially revered and worshipped in the state of Maharashtra. Shri Saibaba Sansthan Trust, under the jurisdiction of Government of Maharashtra is based there. It maintains a complex of Sai Baba temples and publishes publications about him. It also conducts free charity, social and medical work and ensures the development of Shirdi. It is governed by a board of trustees.

One more way by which Sai Baba is remembered by his devotees is by reciting Sai Satcharita which describes the leelas of sai baba. By reciting Sai Satcharita, devotees not only get enlightened towards spiritual path but at the same time feel the presence of Sai Baba around them.

It is also common for Sai Baba's devotees to call him "*Sri Sainath*" or "*Shri Sainath Maharaj*" or to use the greeting "*Sai Ram*".

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