

Shri Saisat Charitra and Gurubhakti

Purnima in Ashad month is termed as 'Vyasapurnima-Gurupurnima'. This day is celebrated with Gurupujan as a mark of respect to the guru. Shirdi is no exception to this as it celebrates this day with its own grace. Given below are Guruvichar and an article by Shri Vidyadhar M. Sathe, a devotee and authority on Saint literature.

The name of the Guru and the intimate association with the Guru, the grace of the Guru and the milk-like sacred water which has washed his feet, the sacred, mantra from the Guru and residence in his household-these could be obtained with great efforts.58

(Chapter 1)

There are beautiful sayings on Guru in Shri Saicharitra written by late Annasaheb Dabholkar. 'The above one is one of them. All the things in the world are not materialistic and cannot be purchased with money or by effort. Gurukripa and Guruprapti have to be in your destiny. Fake and bogus gurus/babas appearing in newspapers or TV can be easily purchased. Hemadpant has rightly said about these gurus in Shri Saicharitra-

‘बहुत ऐसे असती गुरु । शिष्य करिती धरुधरु ।

देती बळेंचि कानमंतरु । सितरुनि वित्तार्थ’ ॥ (१०/६१)

We are aware and selective about many things occurring in our day to day life but we are totally unaware and ignorant when it comes to selection of a guru. We are misguided very often through hearsay or magic and accept any Tom, Dick, Harry as our guru, resulting in repentance of the future. Wearing saffron clothes, sporting malas and gancha tikkas does not make a saint or a guru. One should not get carried away with the outer appearance but should go deep in the inner soul to find a true guru.

Shri Sai Baba has never mentioned about his own guru but his devotion and faith towards guru had its own ultimate heights. Shri Sai-Baba has explained the greatness of his guru in chapter 19 of Shri Saicharitra.

I had a Guru who was a great Aulia, an ocean of kindness.

The greatness of his guru has been explained in 68 sayings in this chapter. Shri Sai-Baba very honestly offered his services to his guru for 12 years. Guru asked him for 'Dakshina' of 2 paise in the form of 'Shraddha and Saburi', which Sai Baba gave promptly and made guru happy.

‘Faith (Shraddha) and patience (saburi)- these were the two (pice) and nothing else. I gave them immediately, by which, my Guru was pleased with me, who was like my mother.’ (52 chapter 19)

I lived at his feet for twelve years. The Guru brought me up from childhood. There was never a dearth of food and clothing and he nurtured immeasurable love for me. - 61-19

'Gurukul' system

'Gurukul' system was prevalent in ancient India. Disciples stayed there for 12 years to achieve vidya. Lord Shri Ramchandra and Shri Krishna have also spent 12 years in Gurukul for education. Shri Ram spent 12 years in Vasishtarishi gurukul while Shri Krishna and Balram spent in Sandipanirishi Gurukul. 'Kutumbsansta' (Family organisation) is also a prominent feature of old Indian tradition. Guru is always respected after mother and father. Guru used to command respect of a spiritual father and thus many disciples used their guru's name for father. Indian Gurukul tradition comprising of 64 arts has been carefully protected and has grown over for last thousand years. Sant Dnyaneshwar has praised guru in 13th chapter of 'Dnyaneshwari':

गुरु क्षेत्र, गुरु देवता ।
गुरु माता, गुरु पिता ।
गुरु सेवे परीता ।
मार्गू नेणे ॥ (ज्ञा. १३:४६)

Dnyaneshwari briefs us on Bhagvatgita but also comments on the importance of 'Gurumahatmya'. Dnyaneshwar has given full credit of writing Dnyaneshwari to his guru Nivrutinath. He has also gone to the extent of replacing his own name with Nivrutidas.

ऐसे निवृत्तीनाथांचे ।
गौरव आहे जी साचे ।
ग्रंथु नोव्हे हे कृपेचे ।
वैभव लिये ॥ (ज्ञा.१८अ.)

Sant Dnyandev has praised guru in almost all the chapters of Dnyaneshwari. Dnyandev has written 90 sayings in single words 'Acharyopasti' glorifying his guru. Shri gurusmaran, Sadguru gungaurav, Gurupuja, Gurumahima, Gurukripadrashti, Guruswarup, Gurusamarthya, Gurustostra, Guru jajaykar, Gurudasya, Guru Parampara and many other sayings composed by Dnyaneshwar makes you feel as if you are watching a rainbow full of Guru devotion colours. Shri Sai baba has also expressed his feelings towards guru in chapters 19 and 32 of Sri Sai Charitra written by Hemadpant.

Sai Baba says:-

How could I describe that love! When I looked at him he seemed as if he was in deep meditation and we both were filled with bliss. I could never look anywhere else. - 63 chapter 19

How wonderfull was the Guru's School! I became detached from my parents love and the chains of greed and love snapped. I attained salvation easily.-76 chapter 32

I would go on looking affectionately at the face of the Guru, day and night. I knew no hunger or thirst. My mind would get restless without the Guru-64 Chapter 19

If you go to the deep routes of chapters 19 and 32 you will find a lot of similarity in Saibaba's gurubhakti and Dnyandev gurubhakti. The feelings of a son towards his mother and that of a disciple towards his guru is the same. A feeling of realisation may differ but the base remains the same.

Importance of unity

Shri Sai-Baba has never treated any one as his disciple, but devotees treat Sai-Baba as their gurus. Shyama Deshpande, Mhalasapati, Kakasaheb Dixit, Dasganu Maharaj, Upasani Maharaj, Dev, Khaparde, Butti, Kote, Kashiram Shimpi have considered Sai-Baba as guru and also have experienced many miracles. Today innumerable devotees all over the world worship Sai-Baba as a guru. Sai-Baba has also obliged the devotees by giving darshan in one form or the other, conveying the message of 'God is One'.

We come across various idols of gods, goddesses, different religious books, many saints, but this is all superficial. The base of all this is 'Rupatmak' and 'Namatmak'. Sai Baba teaches to find one god in all of them. Sai-Baba asked devotees to read Dnyaneshwari, Nathabhagwat, Guru charitra, Vishnusahastranam. These are all different books considering the outward appearance, but the secret and the pillars for the same is 'Nambhakti'. Similarly offered is his darshan in different forms such as vitthalrup, Ramrup, Dattarup and Ishtagurup conveying the message that idols are different but god is one in all the idols.

Sai-mandir: - Spiritual Energy centres

Maharashtra is well-known for its saints' traditions. Whether it is Sant Dynoba or Sant Tukdoji Maharaj, the origin is Maharashtra. This tradition of Saints is classified in two segments 1) Madhyamyuga and 2) Adhunik. Sant Dnyandev, Namdev, Eknath, Tukaram, Ramdas are considered as Madhyamyuga saints while Adhunik section is listed with Akkalkot Swami Maharaj (Gondavle) and Swami Swarupanand of Pawas. All these five Saints have virtually dominated spiritual lives of countless devotees over generations. Sai Baba Bhakti and his reputation have crossed the country limits and have spread in other continents too. Sai-Baba temples and spiritual energy centres have become a common feature in foreign countries also. Kakasaheb Dixit in chapter 23 of Shri Sai Charitra says:-

Baba, your nectar like words are only dharma and laws in our life - 170 (chapter 23)

we have no other dharma, we have no shame, obeying the Guru's order is our only creed. It is our veda and Shastra. - 171 (Chapter 23)

We are the slaves of your command. we do not think what is right or wrong. If need be, we would even sacrifice our life, but would obey the order of the Guru.

On the occasion of Gurupurnima we tried to get closer and understand Gurubhakti as written in Shri Sai Charitra. An honest and devoted gurubhakti is the base of the growth. I conclude this article with a beautiful saying composed by Sant Dnyandev.

जाणतेनि गुरु भजिजे ।

तेणे कृतकार्या होईजे ।

मूळसिंचने सहजे ।

शाखापल्लव संतोषती ॥

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Sai-Baba's preaching is straight and simple. The creator of human beings and humanity is a human being himself. No surprise his preaching have crossed country limits. One day Sainaam jagar will be heard all over the world. In this article we have tried to review the magical growth of Sai-devotion and worship in Canada.

Sai-Dwarkamai – A spiritual Place

Feb 2002 – Sai-Baba gave the first darshan in the form of a photo frame at Dwarkamai in Markham city in Canada. This was followed by the setting up of Shirdi Sai-Baba Sansthan Canada. What a coincidence it was when five unknown people met, turned out to be Sai-devotees and launched the beginning of Sai-darbar in Canada. Slowly many Sai-devotees started gathering on Thursdays and started celebrating festivals like Ramnavami, Gurupurnima, Dussera and New Year.

July 2002 – Guru Purnima is an auspicious day. Sai Baba appeared through 2ft tall Sangamravari which is an energy generating unit for the upcoming young generation. It was decided to March on the path shown by Sai-Baba and together overcome social as well as natural calamities. This gave birth to the idea of forming Shirdi Sai-Baba Sansthan Canada.

It was decided to form this trust with prior permission and blessings from Sai-baba Shirdi. With this purpose some devotees visited Shirdi. They were fortunate to have valuable guidance from Shri C.B. Satpathy a senior and a staunch Sai-devotee. Finally Shirdi Sai-Baba Sansthan Canada Charitable Trust was established in August 2003.

Trust Programmes

2003 – This trust played a vital role in arranging the virtuous meetings for Sai-devotees at Vithal Mandir in Mississauga city on all Thursdays. This was also followed by virtuous meetings at Dwarkamai in Markham city.

2004 – Beginning of joint prayers and non-stop 'parayan' at Sai-devotees' residences.

2005 – Trust helps formation of new Sai-devotee groups at Vancouver, Edmonton, Windsor, Hamilton, HHEE, Malton, Brampton, Mississauga and Scarborough. The Trust took the initiative in performing the first idol worship in a Hindu temple at Hamilton, and pooja started getting performed at Gurumandir in Etobicoke. A place for Sai-puja was finalised with the help of a trust at Scarborough. Awareness was created for free food, clothing and providing of basic necessities of life in cities of Toronto and Vancouver.

Jan-April 2006 – Shree Sai Charitra volume was freely distributed through a newly set up site. This volume is made available in many languages. Similarly Sai-litreture, books, CD/DVDs and posters are also made available.

2006 – Distribution of 'Shri Sai Stavan Manjiri' by Shri Dasganu.

2007-2008-2009 :- In all these 3 years, Sai-darbar was organised for 3 days and on an average around 10,000/- devotees in Canada availed of Sai-darshan on each occasion. Besides this free distribution of Sai-baba photos and Shri Sai-Charitra was also organised.

2007 :- Distribution of Shri Sai Charitra volumes thru 400 libraries in Canada.

Goal, Aim and Principles of Shri Shirdi Sai Sansthan Canada

All activities and projects undertaken by this trust are run in line with the preaching of Sai-baba 'Shradha and Saburi.'

- The arrangements for worship, Puja and darshan here are on the same lines with the arrangements at Sai-Baba Samadhi mandir, Gurusthan, Chawdi, Dwarkamai and Dhuni at Shirdi. Devotees here get a feeling and satisfaction of performing puja in Shirdi itself. All these projects are undertaken by Shri Shirdi Sai-Baba Sansthan Canada.
- Opening of Sai-centres at various places well-equipped with Sai idols, photos, Video/Audio Cassettes, Magazines and Posters.
- Full use of Media to reach Sai-Preaching and Principles in every corner of the world.
- To set up a spiritual center for senior/elderly people at their residences itself, to provide free Medical treatment, food, clothing and shelter to poor and needy sections of the society. Overcoming and helping people in natural calamities. Arranging of visits/trips to various places of pilgrimage in different parts of world.
- To assist and render valuable services to charitable trusts in North America and rest of the world.
- To bring all Sai-devotees under one umbrella and on one stage and give full justice to Sai's preaching of 'God is one'
- Setting up of temples, residences, cottages and decorating the same with Baba's paintings and hoardings and creating religious and spiritual atmosphere. Here devotees can stay away from day to day temptations and surrender totally at Sai's feet.

Sai Family Vancouver Canada

The beginning of Sai Satsang at Vancouver is very amazing. Seven years back in 2005, three families came together and began Sai Satsang at cities of Delta, Vancouver and Canada.

Over a period of time, these 3 families got multiplied and become an ocean. Now on every Thursday Sai-devotees gather at 6.30 at Sai Kutir, 9529, 199 a street, Delta, BCV 4CP4.

Sai-abhishek and noon arti is arranged an every Sunday at 11.30 am. Free food is provided to poor and needy people on 2nd and 4th Saturday of every month. Similarly this Sai-Family also celebrates festivals like Ramnavami, Gurupurnima, Holi, Diwali, Shivratra, Navratra, Mahasamadhi puja and x'mas too.

This Sai family is simple and down-to-earth. This Sai family has no trustee. Everyone gathers here only with Sai-attraction. There is no discrimination among Sai-devotees. Today many devotees are getting attracted to this Sai family.

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Century Old

Today it is almost a century for the events in Sai-history, whether it is the first interaction with Baba or construction of a structure. Many Senior citizens have eye witnessed these events. We are trying to review such events in this article.

- **Shravan Shuddha Purnima year 1912 - Establishment of Paduka's at Nimbtree, Shirdi**

How was Shirdi village around 150 years back and no one can reply to this as Shirdi does not have historic background when compared to Paithan or Pandharpur. Pandharpur has a rich tradition of Sant Namdeo while Paithan was the capital of 7 vehicles.

There are such events in Shirdi history which are worth being recorded. There are doubts whether Shirdi appeared on Ahmadnagar Dist. map at all. Shirdi in those days could be termed as an underdeveloped village. One can visualise old Shirdi's prominent features such as a spacious wada of respectable Patil surrounded by small shady huts, a flowing stream, Chawdi, packed with gossipers and green farms with a scarecrow. This was Shirdi a peculiar underdeveloped village. Like all other villages, Shirdi villagers also had their own lifestyle and were engrossed in day to day ups and downs such as celebrating births, marriages, mourning deaths, sickness, draughts, fights and reunions. Villagers had accepted this as a routine life style. There was no change what so ever in this routine cycle for years, except for noble people like Jankidas, Devedas and Gangagirbua who visited the village once in a while and devotees visiting Rameshwar, Pandharpur halted for a while. Time cycle was moving at its pace but with no change in Shirdi. There was no worry for future or any repentance and remembrance of the past.

And one day, something unusual happened, which was beyond the imagination of the villagers.

A balyogi was spotted in the outskirts of the village below a nimbtree. Shirdi village was not new to saints, sadhus and fakirs but this yogi had a glowing splendour on his face. But nobody realised that he is the key to their fortune. And as usual people crowded him in order to know about his whereabouts. But balyogi was unmoved and was quiet and stockstill. And one fine day khandoba himself appeared to his devotees. Villagers were stunned and dazed. People bowed down modestly and started asking various questions and one of them asked about this balyogi to which, khandoba replied spontaneously, "bring a spade and dig the place which I show." The villagers started digging and to their surprise they witnessed a small grindstone. Khandoba asked to remove the grindstone and villagers were stunned to notice an underground tunnel with a wooden plank in the centre surrounded by lighted samai and eye catching japmal. God realising villagers' anxiety told this balyogi has done penance here for 12 years. To which balyogi said "this is my guru's holy sthan and you all please preserve the holiness of this sthan." The villagers closed the tunnel and very humbly bowed down to Balyogi. Balyogi told the villagers who ever cleans this place on Friday and Saturday after sunset will have the fortune of being blessed from Shri-Hari.

Now balyogi started attracting a lot of crowd. A neglected nimbtree for years together suddenly became a place of worship and one day to everyone's surprise, balyogi disappeared and the nimbtree become lonely once again.

Since there was an unimaginable change in Shirdi. Barren land with thorns and stones changed and become fertile to the extent that it became a guardian for lakhs of people.

Shirdi's destiny had taken a positive turn. This change was with the arrival of Sai in Shirdi. Initially it was difficult for villagers to digest this but slowly and gradually villagers accepted the existence of this super human power. Now people all over the world started visiting

Shirdi. Baba's puja and arti became a routine. Devotees took Baba to Chawdi in a procession with love and affection. Baba started getting lot of precious and valuable gifts. But Baba was aloof and neutral and was not interested in these.

One day Sagun Meru Naik, Govind Kamlakar Dixit (Compounder of Dr. Kothare) and bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar were chatting together about Baba's miracles and suddenly a bright idea erupted from Paduka Sthapna at Nimbtree, the place of origin of Baba. This idea was put in action immediately by Bhai Krishnaji Alibagkar who got Padukas carved on stone. But these Padukas were not graceful, neat or tidy. Upon this Dr. Kothare's compounder suggested that his owner if informed can give one of the best Padukas.

Accordingly Dr. Ramrao Kothare was informed. Dr. Kothare prepared a detailed map of Sangamravri Padukas and reached shirdi. Dr. Kothare had a habit of meeting Upasani Maharaj during his visit to Shirdi. This time too he met Upasani Maharaj with the map in khandoba temple. Upasani maharaj saw the map and said, "Whatever you are doing is very good but ensure that the paduka should have pictures of Kamal Bapatri, Shankh, Chakra, Goda and Padya and should be covered from all the four sides by Sangamravri stone planks. Most important is that Padukas should never be kept on a floor but should be on a wooden plank on a little height from the floor. Importance of nimbtree and baba's 'Yogeshwarya Darshan' should be written in the form of shlokas on a wooden plank in 'Givarna' lipi."

The doctor agreed with all the instructions and come to Bombay with the map. In Bombay, the doctor made the necessary changes suggested by Upasani Maharaj in padukas and map and sent them to Shirdi with the compounder. The Padukas were kept in khandoba temple for two days. After a few days, the compounder asked for Baba's permission for deciding sthapna day. Baba advised him to do sthapna on Shravan Shuddha Purnima below the nimbtree. Shri Saisat Charitra and Gurubhakti

Shravan Shuddha Purnima – The day of the installation of the Padukas below Nimbtree. The full atmosphere was full of enthusiasm, all the musical instruments such as Halgi, Tasha, Sambal were displaying their melodies and suddenly there was a huge applaud of 'Shri Samarth Sadguru Sainath maharaj ki jay' and the procession moved out of Khandoba temple and started marching towards Dwarkamai.

This story goes way back around 50 years before paduka sthapana. One fine day a revolutionary with supernatural power come to khandoba Mandir. Here itself this great man was named 'Sai'. And today this great man's padukas were very religiously taken to Dwarkamai. There was a time when this great man was abused insulted and driven out, and today the man was welcomed with flowers. Baba was the same, people were same but the awareness had changed. This was a live example of 'Shraddha and Saburi'.

The Paduka procession reached Dwarkamai. Govindrao Dixit placed padukas near Baba's feet. Baba touched the padukas and said 'These are the almighty's feet; please place them below Nimbtree in Sathewada.' Accordingly the padukas were placed below the Nimbtree and 'Pranpratishta ceremony' began. Puja was performed by Upasani Maharaj while Dada Kelkar did the pranpratishta of the Padukas. This function was well attended by Bapusaheb Jog, Balasaheb Bhate, Sagun Meru Naik and many other Sai devotees.'

Padukas whether of Sai or Swami

There is a feeling in devotees that the Padukas places below nimbtree in 1912 belong to Akkalkot swami. This has been mentioned in the 5th chapter of Shri Sai Charitra. It was said that there was a staunch devotee of Akkalkot swami by the name of Bhai. Once Bhai thought of visiting Akkalkot for swami's Paduka Darshan and made the necessary arrangements too. But

swami appeared in Bhai's dreams and said to him, "at present I am in Shirdi, so you visit Shirdi." Bhai religiously obeying swami's advice reached Shirdi and was literally overwhelmed with Sai-Darshan.

This establishment of Swami Padukas below nimbtree in 1834 (1912) is in remembrance of swami's illusion. The establishment of the padukas was done by Dada Kelkar while religious rites were performed by Upasani Maharaj. The Routine puja work was assigned to Dixit and Sagun took responsibility of overall supervision.

This story is reflected in the 5th chapter of Shri Sai-Charitra. 'Shiladhi' a book written by Dr. K.B. Govankar gives us detailed information on above.

Now a million dollar question was whether the Padukas belong to Swami or Sai and Dr. K.B. Gavankar rightly says and advises, "Not to get into baseless arguments as both these saints are one and this has been proved thru their miracles. It is said that if you worship Sai then your prayers reach Swami and vice versa. Last but not the least, Bhai had planned to visit Akkalkot for Paduka Darshan, to which swami himself had told him that his existence is in Shirdi."

This is how Padukas were placed below a Nimbtree.

Paduka Establishment ceremony costs Rs. 100/ in those days

The total cost of Paduka Sthapna was Rs. 100/- out of which Baba contributed Rs. 25/- while balance Rs. 75/- was contributed by Bhaikrishnaji, Vasudeo Appaji Kate and Govindrao Dixit. There is a story behind Baba's contribution of Rs. 25. Shri pastashet a Parsee devotee had money-ordered Rs. 25 in Bhai's name for handling over to Baba. This money reached Bhai one day before Paduka Sthapna, which Bhai promptly gave to Baba. Baba returned the money to Bhai and told him "we will require this tomorrow".

Sada Nimbvrikshyasya Muladhipasat...

Sada Nimbvrikshyasya muladhipasat I
Sudhastravinam Tiktamapyapriyantam II
Tarum Kalpavriksha dhikamsadhayantam I
Namamishwaram Sadgurum Sainatham II

Divabatti of Padukas

Shree Govind Kamlakar Dixit worshipped and performed puja of the Padukas for 5 years by asking bhiksha. Dr. Kothare regularly sent Rs 2/ per Month towards lighting charges. After Dixit, puja was taken over by Shri Laxman Kacheshwar Jakhadi alias, Nanu Pujari, Dr. Kothare had sent an iron gallery to protect the padukas. Sagun Meru Naik Spent Rs. 7-8 for bringing this iron gallery from Mumbai to Shirdi. Every day the naivadya and lighting was also looked after by sagunrao.

Gurusthan and Shivapind

There exists a shivpind and a shivling in gurusthan. Now a question arises what is the reason behind the existence of the shivpind and shivling in gurusthan, which is explained here. Megha was a staunch Shiva devotee and he spent many days in Shirdi doing Baba's seva. One fine day he went to his village and fell sick. One evening during darshan he saw Sai-Baba in place of the shivpinda. From that day the doubt in his mind that Sai and Shankar are two different entities disappeared. After recovery from his sickness, megha returned to shirdi. But now megha was a changed person, he worshipped baba with shankar in his mind. To the extent,

he used to stand on one foot and perform Baba's arti. One fine morning while getting up from sleep he saw baba's idol very clearly and heard baba saying, "Megha bring the trishul." Happy with this illusion, Megha rushed to Dwarkamai and reported this event to Baba and asked Baba, "do I draw a trishul near your photo?"

After having acquired Baba's permission, Megha painted a Trishul in red kumkum on the right side of the photo.

The next day itself, one Ramdasi devotee come for Baba's darshan and presented Baba with a shaving. Baba handed over the Shivling to Megha and said "Look Shankar is come, now look after him".

Gurusthan was previously known as Sathewada and Megha resided in Sathewada itself.

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Shirdi News Shri Guru Purnima 2012

Guru-shishya (teacher-disciple) is a very old tradition in our Hindu culture. All our festivals except Diwali are celebrated only for a day. Gurupurnima is one of them. Till 1908, Guru purnima celebrations in Shirdi also had its own limitations. But with Baba's blessings, Guru purnima started getting celebrated with great zeal and enthusiasm. Today Guru purnima and Baba have become a equation. This year also Guru purnima was celebrated with great anxiety and enthusiasm on Monday 2nd July 2012 till Wednesday 4th 2012.

As mentioned above Guru shishya (teacher-disciple) is a very old tradition. Ashad Purnima is also considered as Guru-purnima and is celebrated as a mark of respect to the guru. Vyas puja is also considered to be Guru-purnima. Guru-purnima as on date has a lot of importance in Shirdi. Countless devotees visit Shirdi on Guru-purnima and take Samadhi darshan. This year around 97 palkhis arrived in Shirdi from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Calcutta on occasion of Guru-purnima.

The residential arrangements of visiting devotees was made in Sainagar maidan, Sainath Mangal Karyalaya, Sai Udyan, New Bhaktinivas Sthan and Sai Prasad Bhakti Nivas Sthan while lunch arrangements was done in a huge tent erected near new Bhaktinivas sthan.

The festival started with a Kakad arti at 4.30am on Monday 2nd July. This was followed by a grand procession of Shri Sai idol and Shri Saicharitra volume. Shri Kishore More, Exe. Officer (committee) and Dr. Yeshwantrao Mane (Dy. Exec. Officer) along with other Sai devotees participated in this procession. Shri Saicharitra parayan began on arrival of this procession in Dwarkamai. Shri Kishore More (Exe. Officer) read out the 1st chapter, Dr. Yeshwantrao More read 2nd while Sai devotees Shri Milind Khopkar, Sov. Sangita Pardesi and Shri Babashed Gaikwad read out 3rd, 4th and 5th chapters respectively. This day's Padya puja was done at the hands of Shri Kishore and Sou. Manjushri More. Afternoon arti was done sharp at 12.30. Melodious kirtan was performed by Shri Madhav Ajogaonkar Parbhav between 4pm-6pm. This was followed by Shri Dhuparti at 7pm. Sai-bhajan sandhya programme was presented by Shri Vishwnanth Oza, Shri Ramfur at 7.30 on a stage near Samadhi mandir.

A grand procession of Shri palkhi started at 9.45 am from Samadhi mandir and moved out to Shirdi city. Many locals as well visiting Sai devotees participated in this procession. On this occasion various Laxim band 2012 squads presented their arts. A bharud programe welcome palkhi premises. Dwarkamai was kept open throughout the night on occasion of "Akhand Parayan".

Thursday 3rd July the most auspicious day of the festival. The day began at 4.30 am with Shri Kakad arti. This was followed by a procession of Shri pothi, vina from Dwarkamai to Guru mandir and finally at Samadhi mandir. Arti "Shirdi maze pandharpur" was performed on the arrival of the procession in Samadhi mandir. This was also marked as a closure of "Akhand parayana". Shri Jayant Kulkarni CH. Dist. Magistrate Shri Kishore More- Exe. Officer, Dr. Yeshwantrao Mane - Dy. Exe. Officer along with many Sai devotees participated in this procession. Padyapuja was performed by Shri Jayant and Sou. Anuradha Kulkarni, Dilip Valse Patil (President vidhan sabha) Baburao Pachpute, Minister Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil (Agriculture and Irrigation minister) Vijay Uattediwar Ex. Minister Jayant Sasane (Exe. President sansthan) and Sau. Shalinitai Vikhe Patil (Exe. President) took Samadhi darshan on occasion of Guru purnima. Shri Madhav Ajangaonkar- Parbhani President. A bhajan between 4 - 6pm a usual bhuparti was offered at 7pm. Shri Sai Gopal Deshmukh bead narrated total Sai-

Baba's lifestyle through songs, dance and dramas at 7.30 pm on a stage near the Samadhi mandir. The night was dominated by a huge procession of Sai rath, which left Samadhi mandir at 9.15 pm and reached the mandir via Dwarkamai and Shirdi city. Local Bhajan group, Band & lazim squads also participated in this grand procession.

A bhaurud programme was organized in the Mandir premises on the arrival of this procession. Samadhi mandir was kept open in the night for darshan on this auspicious day. Various artists from different fields marked their presence between 11 and 5 am.

4th July Wednesday the last day of the festival began with mangalsnan of Shri at 5.5 am. This was followed by Rudrabhishek puja at gurusthan and padyapuja at Samadhi mandir by President Shri Jayant Kulkarni and Sau. Anuradha Kulkarni. Morning 10.30 am was marked with a Gopalkala kirtan by Shri Madhav Ajongaonkar parbhani. As per the tradition every year an eye-catching dahi-handi program was performed at 12 noon, followed by afternoon arti. Shri Madhav Ajongaonkar was honoured by the committee. The evening began with dhuparti at 7pm. B Vijayajyoti (Vishakhapatnam) presented her dance art at 7.30pm. Shejarti was offered at 10.30pm.

Many Sai devotees could avail of Sai-darshan and watch this festival live through various TV channels. The free lunch (Prasad) with a sweet dish for all this 3 days served in Sai prasadalaya was sponsored by Shri Mukesh Radhi- Bhopal, Shri Vijay Singh Raj Bharuch, Ayushi, Agarwal Raipur, Shri Bhavesh Patil Pune, Amersh Ind. Pvt. Ltd., Pune Vashvi Yash and family New Delhi, Jaikishan Jolani Sydney (Australia), Nita and Sou. Nikita Kolge- Mumbai, Manu Sharma and family Delhi, Karumudi Venkatrani Reddy and Shri NB Raju & NB Devi (Vishakhapatnam).

The festival was made a grand success under supervision of the sansthan president /ch. Dist magistrate Jayant Kulkarni, Dr. Sanjiv Kumar Dayal (contractor), Shri Kishor More (Exe. Officer) and Dr. Yeshwantrao mane (Dy. Exe. Officer). The staff members and other voluntary organizations along with many social workers took special efforts to make this festival a memorable event.

Highlights of the festival

- Shri VM Vijay Rama, a Sai-devotee from Bangalore decorated the Mandir premises and the mandir with attractive flowers, while eye catching lighting was done by Sai-raj decorators' Mumbai.
- A Sai devotee from Nhava sheva presented a gold necklace weighing around 9 kg values at Rs. 2.57 lacs.
- Shri CH Pullarao Director of M/s Rajrajeshwari Agency, Mancheriyal, Andhra Pradesh gifted Isher 242 Tractor worth Rs. 3 lacks to Sansthan.
- Shri Rajendra Davram Kote (Nagarsevak, Shirdi Nagar panchayat), Shri Nilesh Kondaji Shelke, Shri Mangesh Suryavanshi and Shri Jushar Sudam Shelke, sponsored Rs. 62000/- spent towards water supply by tankers during the festival days.
- Around 136 overseas Sai devotees from Germany, USA, Japan, UK Soviet Republic, Netherland, Spain, Luxemburg, Hongkong, Rumania and Canada visited Shirdi and availed of Sai Samadhi darshan.
- 11, 72,364 devotees had Prasad lunch and around 2, 60,000 Laddu plates (Prasad) were distributed.