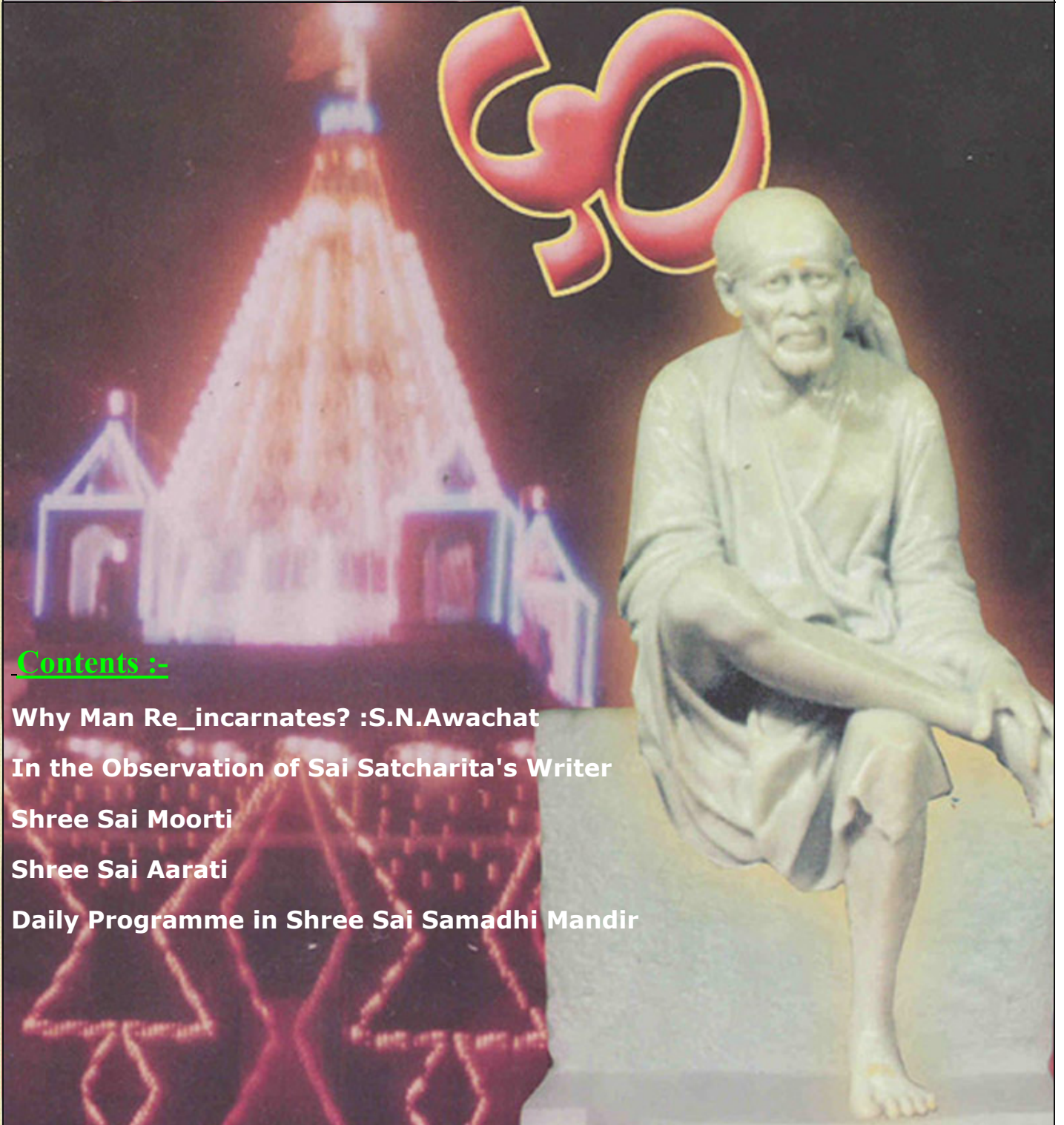


SHRI SAIBABA SANSTHAN, SHIRDI

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WHY MAN RE-INCARNATES ON EARTH ?

Today's science, though advanced, has failed to answer the above question. Though the scientists have revealed many mysteries in this world through various experiments, the riddle of life has baffled them for a pretty long time. Saints and sages in India, however, had a deep thinking over the issue and their views in this regard would help a great deal to aspirants and devotees who seek enlightenment.

Each and every event in man's life has a bearing to his deeds in earlier birth. In other words, happiness or suffering of a man is the outcome of his deeds in his earlier birth. This is known as 'Karmic Law' and the very law is termed as 'destiny' by common man when no explanation can be given for mishaps which we witness in our day-to-day life. According to the said law, to-day's monarch goes in exile next day and a millionaire is declared insolvent all of a sudden. Saints and sages are fully aware of this 'Karmic Law' and as such they face calamities in life with utmost tranquility. It would not be out of place to mention here an event from 'Mahabharat' which clearly shows as to how each event in man's life is viewed in terms of the said law. Bhishma had been lying on a bed of pointed arrows. Seeing his plight, Arjuna asked Lord Krishna as to how a sage like Bhishma, who performed hard penance and austerities, had to lie down on pointed arrows. The Lord replied that Bhishma was a king in earlier birth and while going for hunting he had a chameleon tossed off with his pointed arrow just for fun. The episode of bed of arrows in Bhishma's life had a bearing to the event, which took place in his earlier birth. It will thus be seen that both good and evil deeds shape future of a man, who re-incarnates to experience happiness or suffering according to the trend of events in his earlier birth. In light of this, man should examine his day-to-day activities and try to eradicate evils. Needless to say, human mind carries forward evil thoughts in earlier birth and drags man towards evil deeds. In other words, man once again incarnates to pay for his deeds and undergo sufferings.

Saints and sages have, therefore, attached great importance to the purification of mind which helps man to lead divine life, for good deeds originate through purified mind alone. For purification of mind, saints urge devotees to carry out day-to-day work shedding out ego with complete surrender to the Almighty. In addition to this a devotee has to practice meditation and regulate his activities through restraint which helps a great deal in bringing desired change in one's mode of life. Slowly and gradually, you will reach a stage when you will feel like giving up your longings, for longings alone make you to re-incarnate. The Almighty loves good deeds and as

Re-incarnation of saints and sages on earth is termed as 'advent' since such re-incarnation is always planned by the Almighty in order to carry out certain mission. In case of Sai Baba, His advent was to promote love and lead the masses on the right path. Re-incarnation of saints and sages should, therefore, never be compared with re-incarnation of ordinary man.



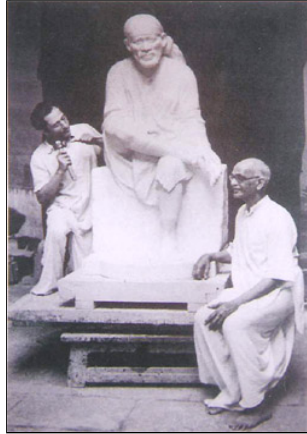
To sum up, evils of earlier birth can easily be wiped out through good deeds and austerities such as meditation and restraint. (For ordinary man, in the present circumstances, 'Namjap' would be easy to achieve the goal. An aspirant should ascertain from the elders the Name of their Family Deity and surrender to Him with utmost devotion.) If you lead your life in this manner, you will surely find a change in your attitude. Your mind will always tend to help others. You will dedicate your life for the worthy cause. A stage will come when you will remain aloof from worldly pleasures, which are the root cause of longing. Having washed out earlier evils, the final stage would be to become a part and parcel of the Almighty. This stage is termed as 'mukti' (salvation) i.e. to merge with the Almighty - reaching the abode of eternal peace. When you reach this stage, you yourself put an end to re-incarnation.

– S. N. Awachat

the saying goes, when you put one step with intention to reach Him, He hurriedly crosses ten steps to come to you.

SAI MOORTI

This year's Shree Sai Baba's *Punyatithi* day is important one more point of view. In 1918, the *Samadhi* of Shree Sai Baba was erected in the present *Samadhi Mandir* and a photo of Shree Sai



Baba was placed behind the *Samadhi*; but the devotees and the management of the Shirdi Sansthan decided to install a marble statue to replace the photo. Hence the Italian marble, donated by one of the devotees, was brought and the famous sculptor and Sai devotee, Sri Balaji Talim, from Mumbai, undertook the task of chiselling a statue out of that marble slab. Sri Talim

thought that if Shree Sai Baba gives him a *darshan* while making this statue, the statue will be of worth and the devotees will also have the feelings.

And sure enough he got the *darshan* of Shree Sai Baba in his studio while on the job. With ceaseless effort and great care Sri Talim completed the work and the statue was transported from Mumbai to Shirdi. From Khandoba temple to the *Samadhi Mandir*, it was brought in procession, accompanied by music of various sort. On the 2nd October i.e. on the Vijayadashami day in 1954, this statue was unveiled at the auspicious hands of Swami Sai Sharananand (Shri Wamanbhai Prangovind Patel, Solicitor from Ahmedabad). For performing the religious ceremony at that time, many learned *brahmins* from Mumbai, Pune and Thane were specially called to Shirdi. Hence this year's *Punyatithi* is adding this importance of being the Golden Jubilee of the installation of the statue. Thus this year's *Punyatithi* has twofold importance and hence it is no wonder if it attracts unforeseen crowd to Shirdi.

SAI AARATI



The common belief is that God is Absolute and Unmanifest – not to be found in His creation on this earth.

Thousands of years ago, the Gita removed this dualism between the Manifest and the Unmanifest; and stated that what is Manifest is a Manifestation of God

and derived from Him. Lord Krishna taught that God fills the universe, all creatures good and bad; and their thoughts and actions are expressions of the Divine and His energy. The cosmos is the embodiment of God. Lord Krishna, therefore, advocated the pursuit of the Lord, in and through His manifested creation.

Goswami Tulsidas in his Ramcharit Manas has beautifully reconciled this controversial aspect of metaphysics by expounding that '*Brahman*' (the Absolute) is basically '*Nirguna*' (Unmanifest) but becomes '*Saguna*' (Manifest) for the sake of the devotees.

"There is really no difference between *Saguna* and *Nirguna* aspects of *Brahman*, according to the *Vedas*, *Puranas* and the opinions of the sages and scholars. That which was first Unmanifest, unborn, void of form and attribute, later became *Saguna* due to the devotion of the *bhaktas*." Again, Tulsidas says : "One who is omnipresent, unborn, beyond any form or name, the same Lord for the sake of the devotees, takes many roles and performs countless, extraordinary feats."

"As *Brahman* is formless, the *Vedas* cannot describe it. By manifesting it in human forms on earth, the saints have abashed the *Nirakar*," as Das Ganu Maharaj says. (Shree Sainath Stavanamanjari, verse 94)

Man's concept of God largely determines his manner of worship. Those who regard God as wholly or largely Unmanifest, worship Him by means of meditation, study of scriptures, practice of austerities and other spiritual disciplines.

Those who acknowledge the Manifest, worship Him in the form of an image, symbol, holy book, prophet or saint. Some, who believe that God is both Manifest and Unmanifest use all available modes of worship, lovingly and selflessly serve Him through His creatures, and spend their whole lives thus adoring Him.

"As long as the worshipper has a form, then it is essential that the *Guru* also has a bodily form. Unless and until one worships the bodily form, true devotion does not spring forth; and, till there is no such devotion, full of love, the inner mind does not blossom." This is what Govind Raghunath Dabholkar alias Hemadpant, says in the Shree Sai Satcharita, Chap. XI, *ovis* 10 and 11.

The objects of the *Saguna* Worship are said to be seven – the image of God, sacrificial altar, fire, supreme light, sun, water, and *Brahmin* (those wearing the sacred thread). "But *Gururaj* is even greater than all the seven... let us single-mindedly worship Him," advocated Hemadpant. "The devotees of the *Guru* experience, on resorting to His Feet with full faith, that not only *Guru* but *Parabrahma* is moved. Such is the marvel of *Guru Pooja* !" (*ovi* 9). Hemadpant also reconciled the *Nirguna* and *Saguna*.

He says : "That which has attributes (*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*) is with form; that which has no attributes is without form. Both are not different from each other. The formless and the one with the form are one." (*ovi* 13) "The concrete and the abstract are one and the same – the abstract is spread in the form of the universe. Whomsoever one can feast one's eyes on; on whose Feet one can rest one's head; on whom one can meditate suitably – love develops there. In whose company one can chat lovingly and who can be worshipped with sandalwood paste and rice coloured with turmeric and *kumkum* – for that a form is a necessity. It is really easy to understand the nature of a bodily form rather than the formless. Once love for the *Saguna* increases, it becomes the awakening for the formless. Baba would evolve various means to enable the devotees to experience the abstract." (*ovis* 14-18). Further, "This manifold perceivable world is the manifestation of the unknown (or invisible). It has taken shape or form from the invisible. This universe which has evolved from *Brahma*, with each part having the same divine essence as the whole, will be assimilated with the invisible from where it has taken birth." (*ovis* 22 and 23)

Pooja can be external or outward or gross; and internal or inward or subtle. The '*Agamas*' (one of the six orthodox heads of Sanskrit literature) mention sixteen acts for the performance of the *pooja* : (1) *Asana* (offering of seat to the Deity or image), (2) *Svagata* (welcoming the Lord or *Devata*), (3) *Padya* (water for washing the Feet), (4) *Arghya* (water offering made in the vessel), (5) *Achamana* (water for sipping), (6) *Madhuparka* (honey, ghee, milk and curd), (7) *Snanama* (bath), (8) *Vastra* (cloth or garments), (9) *Bhushana* (ornaments and jewels), (10) *Gandha* (perfume), (11) *Pushpa* (flower offering), (12) *Dhupa* (incense), (13) *Deepaka* (light), (14) *Naivedya* (food and fruit), (15) *Tambulam* (betel leaf, nuts, etc.), (16) *Vandana* (prostrations and prayers).

Of course, in the course of *Archanam*, sandalwood and saffron paste, flowers, rice coloured with turmeric and *kumkum*, incense and the '*niranjana*' (lamp lighted with pure ghee) are used. Dabholkar, with intense *bhava* or feelings for Lord Sainath, has suggested in the Shri Sai Satcharita "tears to wash His Feet, sandalpaste of pure love to besmear His Body, cloth of true faith to cover His Body, eight *sattvik* emotions in lieu of eight lotus and concentrated mind for *naivedya* (food and fruit) – finally devotion for *tilak* on His Forehead and *Bhakti* as a waistband tied round the Lord before placing the head on His Lotus Feet with prostration and prayer". Das Ganu's words also echo these sentiments in the Shree Sainath Stavanamanjari, verses 112 and 113, where he says :-

"Now with my loving tears

I bathe Your Feet

The sandalwood of true devotion

I make into paste and apply.

The long robe (*kafni*) of these ornamental words I place on You, sincerely.

This garland of adoration

I place round your neck."

The people of Shirdi worshipped Sai as their God. He dwelt in Shirdi as the Embodiment of Pure Existence, Knowledge and Bliss – the *Sadguru*, who was King of Kings ! King of *Yogis* ! Absolute *Brahman* ! While eating, drinking, working in their backyards and fields, doing various household chores they always remembered Sai and sang of His glory. Initially, however, Baba did not allow anyone to worship Him, that is, to do *Archanam*. Whenever any one approached Him with the *pooja thali* or platter, Baba would get angry and even upset the platter. But when He saw the pure devotion of the people He relented. Individual worship of Baba, in the mosque, existed even around 1894 ! Mhalsapati was ahead of most in his worship of Baba, followed by Nanasaheb Chandorkar. Megha also did his *pooja* in style.

But it was Dr. Pandit, a friend of Tatyasaheb Noolkar, who earned the distinction of applying sandalpaste for the first time on Baba's Forehead by drawing a *tripundra* or three horizontal lines, as he did to his own *Guru*. Till then, only Mhalsapati used to apply the sandalpaste to Baba; and, that too, only to His Throat.

"For the worship of other deities, the articles required and the ritual are specific. But, for Your worship, there is nothing in the world which is worthy of You !" says Das Ganu. The devotees worshipped the manifested *Sadguru* Shree Sainath Maharaj at Shirdi as they pleased. Baba used a sack-cloth for His seat, which the *bhaktas* covered with a small beautiful mattress, and put a bolster at His Back. Baba respected the feelings of His devotees and gave them full freedom to worship Him, as they liked. Some waved '*chamaras*' or whisks before Him, some played musical instruments, some laved His Hands and Feet, others applied incense and *attars*, some gave Him betel leaf and nuts, some offered *Arghya* for worship of His Feet, and some offered *Naivedya*.

Congregational worship of Sai Baba commenced with the Noon *Aarati* around 1909; followed by the Bed-time *Aarati* after the Chavadi procession from 10th of December 1909, on alternate days. The Morning *Aarati* also took place at the Chavadi before Baba went to the Dwarakamayi. The practice of Evening *Aarati* started much later.



Daily Programme
in
Shree
Sai
Samadhi
Mandir

04.30	Dwarkamai, Gurusthan, Chavadi open
05.00	Samadhi Mandir opens, <i>bhupali</i> ; <i>abhishek</i> at Gurusthan
05.15	<i>Kakad</i> (morning) <i>Aarati</i> ; <i>Naivedya</i> of butter and sugar to Baba in Samadhi Mandir; oil offered to the lamps in Dwarkamai
05.40	<i>Bhajan</i> in Samadhi Mandir
06.00	<i>Mangal Snaan</i> (washing) of Sai <i>Moorti</i> (statue) and <i>Samadhi</i> in Samadhi Mandir
07.00	<i>Darshan</i> begins in Samadhi Mandir
08.00-09.00	Satyanarayan <i>Pooja</i> – 1 st batch
08.30	<i>Naivedya</i> in Dwarkamai
10.30-11.30	Satyanarayan <i>Pooja</i> – 2 nd batch
11.30	Vaishva Dev <i>Pooja</i> at Dwarkamai
12.00	<i>Madhyanha</i> (mid-day) <i>Aarati</i> ; <i>Naivedya</i> in Samadhi Mandir, Dwarkamai and Gurusthan
04.00	<i>Pothi</i> (devotional reading/study) in Samadhi Mandir
Sunset	<i>Dhoop</i> (evening) <i>Aarati</i>

- 06.30 *Naivedya* in Samadhi Mandir, Dwarmamai and Gurusthan
- 08.00-09.00 Devotional songs in Samadhi Mandir and other cultural programmes (if any)
- 09.00 Gurusthan and Chavadi close
- 09.30 In Dwarkamai water is given to Baba, a mosquito net is hung and the hanging lamp is lit
- 09.30 *Dwarkamai* (the upper part) closes
- 10.00 *Shej* (night) *Aarati*; after this, a *shawl* is wrapped around the Sai *Moorti* in the Samadhi Mandir, a *rudraksha mala* is put around Baba's neck, a mosquito net is hung, and a glass of water kept there
- 10.45 Samadhi Mandir closes after *Shej Aarati*

The *Chavadi* procession (*utsav*) is held every Thursday at 9.00 p.m.