

## Life of ShirdiSaibaba

Shri Saibaba of Shirdi lived between 1838 and 1918, whose real name, birthplace and date of birth are not known. An Indian spiritual guru and a fakir that transcended the barriers of religions, Saibaba of Shirdi was regarded with great reverence by both Hindu and Muslim followers. He lived in a mosque and after death his body was cremated in a temple.

His philosophy ingrained 'Shraddha' meaning faith and 'Saburi' meaning compassion. According to him Shraddha and Saburi were the supreme attributes to reach the state of godliness. It is believed that at a tender age of 16 yrs Shri Saibaba arrived at the village of Shirdi in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra and remained there till his death. He found shelter in Khandoba temple, where a villager Mahalsapathi in the temple addressed him as Sai or Saint.



Saibaba of Shirdi lived an extremely simple and austere life, sleeping on the floor of temple and later taking a ruined mosque as his shelter. With his arrival to Shirdi, in no time he began exhibiting a hypnotic attraction among people as they began flocking to him. He is attributed many miracles doing things that were beyond a mortal's power. He never discouraged these attributes and soon his fame spread like wild fire. Many pilgrims came seeking his blessings. Such was his hypnotism that even the mundane of his activities attracted large crowds. Popular among both Hindus and Muslims, Shri Saibaba became a great building force between the two disparate communities.

He regularly recited Hindu and Muslim prayers. His Hindu followers considered him to be an avatar or reincarnation of Shiva and Dattatreya. Sai Baba did not leave any written works. All his teachings were oral and catchy. His sayings were short, crisp and in layman language with which the common mass could easily associate. Saibaba encouraged charity and 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 Sai Baba of Shirdi was unique in the sense that he lived his message through the essence of his being. He lived among the common people adorning a torn kafni (long robe), sleeping over a mat while using brick as his headrest and got his food by begging. Such was his smile that radiated a mystical charisma and deep seated inward look that hypnotized the people who visited him. His most concise message for one and all alike was

*"Why fear when I am here"*

Saibaba said that he was a slave in the service of those who loved him. He was ever living to help those who turn to him and that he has to take care of his children day and night. Saibaba's mission was to restore belief in god and according to him, "I give people what they want in the hope that they will begin to want what I want to give them (knowledge of the Ultimate)." He then taught values of total surrender to the Almighty Master (ALLAH MALIK EK- The only ONE) and experiences his grace.

Today, Shri Saibaba has millions of devotees in India and abroad. Shirdi, the obscure village in Maharashtra has become a pilgrimage destination much as Bethlehem, Jerusalem or Varanasi. With over 25,000 pilgrims thronging in here each day the number of pilgrims climb to over a hundred thousand on holidays and festival days. There are over 2,000 major Sai temples in different parts of India and 150 abroad in places as far-flung as Canada and Kenya, Singapore and England.