



Shraddha. Saburi.

SAI SANDESH

The Official Monthly Newsletter of

OM SAI MANDIR

A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

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Love All. Serve All.

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GURU POORNIMA SPECIAL ISSUE



GOD'S MIDAS TOUCH: HIS INVISIBLE SIGNATURE

BY THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

Don't be misled by the title. This article is not a mythical tale, nor is it a reflection on the life of King Midas.¹ Here, the phrase "Midas touch" refers to God's benevolent grace, the divine act that transforms even the most ordinary undertaking into an extraordinary enterprise, leaving behind a distinct sign that tells the devotee: "Your little effort met with unexpected success due to My divine blessings."

The silent blessings are really the invisible signature of God, a reciprocal response to fervent prayers and untold sufferings.

[Many devotees may have witnessed Swami moving his index finger in thin air in a gesture of writing. —Editor]

Haven't we all experienced such blessings? Many of our activities are rewarded with success in the most inexplicable—almost mysterious—manner. We attribute such occurrences to "coincidence," "destiny," "our own intelligence," etc. without realizing that it was the Lord who blessed us quietly.

The power of His presence and blessings

All that God blesses becomes a reflection of His perfection and is guaranteed success, even if faced with opposition from the whole world. The lives of avatars, prophets, and even ordinary human beings have proven this truth in every *yuga* (age). When Sai Baba started His divine mission, Shirdi was nothing more than an insignificant hamlet, lacking even bare necessities. Today, the village is an ultramodern township and the most frequented pilgrimage center in the world. The Sathya Sai avatar, too, started His work in a modest hut; now, the Sai mission is spreading light in over 150 countries.

The above instances are trivial when compared to the real work of God—the work of reviving living temples: human beings. Divine energies have on numerous occasions reformed immoral individuals into saints of impeccable character. Lord Rama, for example, redeemed Ratnakar, a highway robber. With Rama's grace, Ratnakar soon became Saint Valmiki and penned the epic *Ramayana*. Jesus, too, did the work of transforming a harlot into a great human being.

Kashinath, an ordinary devotee, visited Sai Baba of Shirdi and stayed there for a period of four years. In these four years, Baba catalyzed the metamorphosis of Kashinath into Upasani Maharaj, the perfect master. In these and many such instances, it was God's Midas touch that did the miracle of transmuting inconsequential people from dust to gold.

Nothing is impossible for God

During the Mahabharata war, Arjuna chose Krishna as his aide, while the rival Duryodhana picked Krishna's mighty army. Who won the war? Arjuna indeed. Why? Was Arjuna single-handedly capable of vanquishing the army of billions of soldiers? Nay! Arjuna was a great archer, no doubt, but his prowess was no match for the galaxy of stalwart warriors assembled by Duryodhana. It was the grace of Krishna (and Arjuna's reliance on Him) that had accomplished the impossible feat.

The word "impossible" finds no place in God's dictionary. On November 23, 1990, Sri Sathya Sai Baba declared that exactly a year from the day, Puttaparthi would witness the inauguration of a super specialty hospital, providing free healthcare to the poor. The skeptics conveyed their doubts with the following thoughts: "Building a super specialty hospital in a village that lacks even basic roads, let alone sophisticated equipment, top-notch doctors, and funds exceeding millions of dollars, sounds unattainable."

Much to their surprise, however, the mission fructified exactly as declared by Swami, and a year from the divine declaration, the first cardiac surgery was performed in the cutting-edge, fully-staffed hospital. Surpassing highest international standards, the hospital is now an international wonder, a model institution. Would such a miracle

have happened but for the divine hand of God?

Divine words are etched in stone

God does not need to predict the future; rather, whatever He wills *becomes* the future. What may sound difficult to ordinary humans is nothing but a child's play for His *sankalpa* (divine will). Sainath has often declared that with His *sankalpa*, He can change earth into sky and sky into earth. Who except God can dare to make such a bold declaration?

PUTTAPARTHI SUPER SPECIALTY HOSPITAL

Cumulative Statistics from 22nd Nov 1991 to 30th Nov 2005.

Cardiac Surgeries: 15,254

Cath Procedures: 16,947

Urology Surgeries: 27,838

Ophthalmology Surgeries: 27,252

Echo Cardiography: 391,900

Source: http://www.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_04/01JAN06/ht_hs.htm

Imagine what He can do

During the early days, Swami would often take devotees to the sandy beach of the River Chitravathi. Sometimes, He would materialize beautiful gold images of Krishna and other deities from out of the sand. These were not ordinary miracles; they were encrypted messages informing humanity about the power of God as if saying, "If the Lord can convert dust into divine images, imagine what He can do with [living] humans."

The transformational power of divine association

Once, Guru Dattatreya (the trinity of Godhead personifying the combined energies of creation, preservation, and destruction) was visiting a holy river. There, He spotted a woman contemplating suicide. The Holy One rescued her from the dishonorable act and questioned the necessity of a measure so extreme. She responded by recounting her tragic tale. The cause of her grief was a dullard son who, despite numerous attempts, was unable to grasp even the most basic spiritual knowledge (a pre-requisite for honorable living in those days). As a result, the child had become the subject of constant harassment and ridicule at the hands of local villagers.

The Lord's butter-like heart melted and He placed His hand on the child. In a trice, the lad became the master of four Vedas and gained fair renown as a scholar with unmatched intelligence.

Not only humans, animals too benefit from holy association. An eagle is generally considered a snake-eating bird; yet, when the same eagle is related to Lord Vishnu, it becomes the worship-worthy Garuda. Not only Garuda, mouse, the vehicle of Lord Ganesha; snakes, the garland of Lord Shiva; lion, the recipient of Mother Durga's grace—all of these are given reverence due to their connection with divine forces. Such is the power of sacred company. [Physical proximity is not a pre-requisite for receiving blessings; constant *naama smarana* is the equivalent of being in God's company. —Editor]

When a drop of water merges with the ocean, it gains the power of the entire ocean. In the same way, when we merge our ego into the divine feet, our potential becomes infinite and we benefit from Sai's Midas touch.

¹ The legendary king in Greek mythology, who had the ability to turn anything he touched into gold.

OM SAI MANDIR'S ACTIVITIES

DAILY ARATIS

Kakad Arati: 8.00 A.M.
Madhyana Arati: 12.00 P.M.
Dhoop Arati: 6.00 P.M.
Sheja Arati: 8.00 P.M.

SPECIAL BHAJANS

Every Thursday: 7.00 P.M.-8.30 P.M.
Every Sunday: 2.00 P.M.-3.00 P.M.
STOTRAS (CHANTING SAHASRANAM, BABA'S 108 NAMES, ETC.): Daily
ANNADAN (FOOD SERVICE): Daily at the Mandir
ANNADAN (FOOD SERVICE) FOR HOMELESS BROTHERS AND SISTERS: Every Saturday at 1 P.M. 29th and 1st Ave. Call 718-461-0454

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Vahana Puja: \$15
Annadan: \$251
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UPCOMING EVENTS

July 2006

Tuesday, Jul. 04: America's Independence Day
Monday, Jul. 10: Guru Poornima/Vyasa Poornima

August 2006

Tuesday, Aug. 15: India's Independence Day
Wednesday, Aug. 16: Sri Krishna Janmashtami
Sunday, Aug. 27: Ganesh Chaturthi/Siddhivinayak Chowthi

SAI WISDOM

Service to God has been described as *bhakti* (devotion). The heart of the devotee overflows with love for the Lord through constant remembrance and recitation of His name. Out of this stream of love, devotion emerges. One who is nourished by the nectar of *bhakti* will not desire anything. To be unaffected by joy or sorrow, gain or loss, praise or blame, to remain steadfast and unwavering in faith is the hallmark of true devotion. Affection, attachment, desire are natural to man. However, when these qualities are directed toward God and when one is continuously engaged in good deeds, these qualities acquire purity and sacredness. Then one becomes not just a great soul but God Himself. - BABA

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GURU POORNIMA (VYASA POORNIMA)

ADAPTED FROM GURU POORNIMA 2005 SPECIAL ISSUE OF *Sai Sandesh*

Celebrated on the *poornima* (full moon) day in the month of *Ashada*, the sacred festival of Guru Poornima offers homage to the guru. This holy day was traditionally started in honor of Sri Vyasa Bhagawan, who is considered the first guru of theism. It was Veda Vyasa, Lord Krishna incarnate, who has given mankind an enormous gift, nay a spiritual treasure, in the form of four *Vedas*, eighteen *Puranas*, *Mahabharata*, and *Bhagavata*. It was Vyasa who first revealed to man the secret of making the mind as clear (and full of cool rays) as the moon on a *full moon night*; this is why the *poornima* day is associated with him—and with all gurus.³



Poornima (full moon day) celebrates the fulfillment of the goal of human life. On this day, the moon has no blemish or dullness diminishing its glow. The guru, too, is pictured and praised on this day as being unblemished, bright, and affectionate. He is full of devotion and the sense of surrender to God.² The day also marks the beginning of *chaturmasa* (rainy season), heralding the advent of fresh life through showers of rain, also an indication of the need to perform serious *sadhana* to generate fresh waves of spirituality. *Sadbakas* (aspirants) make full use of this auspicious day by undertaking the study of scriptures and by making a commitment to becoming masters of senses, intellect, emotions, passions, thoughts, and feelings through an intense pursuit of *sadhana* (spiritual practices) and truth.

The Guru

God is the guru of all gurus—and in reality the only guru. Breaking away from the powerful cords of attachment becomes effortless with the help of a truly enlightened master, and such a master can easily lead an earnest aspirant to the bliss-filled shores of liberation. In today's age, it is very difficult to find such saints and, hence, resorting to the Lord within is the safest path to achieve success on the path to immortality.

Gu indicates one who transcends all attributes; *Ru*, the one who has no form. Thus the word “guru” represents one who dispels ignorance. The guru who grants mantras is considered the *Deeksha Guru*; the one who recasts the personality is the *Siksha Guru*. It is the latter who is praised reverentially in great texts, for such a guru removes faults in the vision and destroys the darkness of ignorance. He reveals the true *aatma* (self) to the individual and sets him free.²

The sacredness of this day

On the day of Guru Poornima, the seeker who suffers from the delusion that the objective world is real is guided to truth and those who have not cultivated the urge to explore their own inner reality are inspired to do so. The rising sun blesses the world with heat and light. In the same way, with the guru's blessings, the pupil experiences peace and joy. Guru Poornima, however, is not one day alone; it is all the days when the mind of man, whose presiding deity is the moon, is *poorna* (full) due to the cool refreshing rays it receives from the sun (intelligence). The underlying message is that the mind must derive illumination from the intellect, the discriminative faculty, and not from the senses, which are the deluding forces.



Loka Samastha...Sukhino Bhavantu...

There is an ancient legend about truth. Once the *devas* (demigods) approached Shiva and pleaded with Him to keep the knowledge of truth away from men and demons, for it would make them invincible. The knowledge was then hidden in the unreachable heights of *aakaasha* (sky). The demons lost interest, but men suffered agony in its absence. So, Shiva hid it in the ocean, and finally when human yearning became overwhelming, He planted it in the heart of every human being. Even there it was not easily available, for man had to penetrate the evils of the five elements that constitute the gross body, the sheaths of the subtle body, and the causal body in order to have a vision of the indwelling *aatma*.²

Once, Sister Nivedita sought Vivekananda's advice for getting one-pointed meditation. The latter replied, “Don't allow Margaret Noble (herself) to come between you and God. ... Offer yourself fully to God.”

Sources:

1. Guru Poornima Discourse, Prashanti Nilayam, 1970
2. Guru Poornima Discourse, Prashanti Nilayam, 1980
3. Guru Poornima Discourse, Mysore, 1961

SRI UPASANI MAHARAJ OF SAKORI: THE MIRROR OF SUPREME SAI

By THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

Fine fruits are potent indicators of a tree's greatness. In the case of a perfect master, the wish-fulfilling tree, attributes like greatness can never be measured—even if the entire human race were to collectively pursue the inquiry. Shirdi Sai Baba has created (and continues to) countless fruits,^a which in turn became trees and generated branches, leaves, and fruits of their own—all working in unison to usher humanity Godward.

In Sai *sampraday* (tradition), the disciple's responsibility rests on the competent shoulders of Sai Guru. A magnet's association with iron pieces imparts magnetic power to the latter. This is exactly what happens in the company of Baba and is amply evidenced by the [Sai-blessed] enlightenment of new age masters like Narayan Baba, Bharadwaja Master, and the like. One such product of Sai's labor was Kashinath Shastri, who metamorphosed into Upasani Maharaj^c in a short span of four years.

Kashinath was born on May 05, 1870, in Satana, Maharashtra (India). During his early teens, he expressed two strong beliefs: First, he declared the futility of formal education meant solely for bread-winning; second, he detested the physical body for causing all human limitations and sufferings. These beliefs found expression through his spiritual propensities and even at that tender age, he would spend most of his time performing *sadhana* (spiritual practices). The austerities were a source of constant worry for the family members, who arranged his marriage with the fond (but vain) hope of enforcing a change.



Shortly thereafter, the detached lad ran away from home but soon returned out of concern for his aged parents. The homecoming was followed by the untimely death of his young wife and a family-imposed remarriage. The fifteen-year-old was then forced to seek employment in Pune but faced many impediments due to a lack for formal education. Under such circumstances, menial labor, begging, and at times just water were his only means for survival. Despite

these adversities, his spiritual zeal had not abated in the least.

Once, the God-intoxicated sage entered a cave and quickly ascended to an elevated state of *samadhi* (transcendental state). He desired to end his life, but experienced another *samadhi* and two visions. In the first, an old man was skinning him alive;^b in the second, he was approaching a stream, when two distinct figures—Hindu and Muslim—appeared there and forcibly pulled off his skin to reveal the shining body within. They said, "Why do you want to die? We are behind you. We won't let you die." The penance had lasted one year.

Kashinath returned home, only to face tragedies. His father and grandfather passed away, leaving the family neck-deep in debt. To ease their burden, he went to Sangli to learn Sanskrit and medicine and became a famous healer in Amraoti. Providence had a different plan, however. Shastri invested his savings in a real estate deal that ultimately failed. He then went on a pilgrimage with his third wife.

Years of asceticism had impacted Upasani's health, often causing spells of incapacitating breathlessness. The couple tried many remedies, but to no avail. Finally, he met Yogi Kulkarni, who attributed the condition to the attainment of a high yogic state and also suggested resorting to Sai Baba. Upasani ignored the counsel.

The divine meeting

On two occasions, an old man appeared out of thin air and recommended warm water as the therapy for Kashinath's chronic illness, a suggestion that quickly restored him to normal health. In 1911, he came to Shirdi and developed a strong faith in Baba, the zenith of which was reached when he realized that the old man he had met earlier was none other than Sai. After staying for two days, Kashinath wanted to return home, but Sai refused. Unaware of Baba's powers, he pleaded vehemently until Sai granted permission on the condition that he would have to return in eight days. Upasani left the place and reached Kopergaon on the eighth day. Despite the continuous walk, he could cover just eight miles in eight days. He met some pilgrims there and returned to Shirdi with them, exactly as willed by Baba—in eight days. The incident awakened Kashinath to the power of Sai.

a. Here, the fruits refer to a sadguru's devotees, disciples, and followers.

b. The vision symbolized the loss of body consciousness and discovery of the inner self.

c. Maharaj is a title generally conferred on kings, but in Maharashtra devotees use it to address saints as well.

Baba would often address Upasani as "pure *Bhagavan* (God)" and describe their bond as being centuries old. Kashinath was asked to stay in the Khandoba temple and "do nothing." The shower of lavish attention on the neophyte sage caused the local devotees to feel jealous, and they constantly harassed Shastri. Many would ask Baba if He had granted everything to the newcomer. Sai would say, "Yes, yes. There is no distinction between us."

The value of suffering

1912 was challenging for Upasani. Constant harassment, extreme poverty, multiple deaths in family, scorpion bites—all of these had filled Kashinath's cup of sorrow to the brim. When he expressed his unhappiness, Baba said, "I am always with you. You need not fear. The more you suffer now, the more excellent will be your future. You are in one scale, and the world is in the other. You are going to be an *avadhuta*. Hundreds will rush to take your *darshan*."¹ The sage soon began to submit to the suffering and realized there was pleasure in pain and pain in pleasure. [Here, Baba elucidates the value of suffering in molding an individual toward enlightenment. —Editor] Sai Baba repeatedly assured him that they had to combine energies to accomplish an important mission. This was prophetic considering Upasani's role in the enlightenment of Meher Baba, Godavari Mata, and many other spiritual lights.

The awakening

Upasani recalls the opening of the *Brahmarandhra* (highest chakra) as follows:

One day while staying in the Khandoba temple of Shirdi, I took a pot of water with me and went out to answer nature's call. I went in the fields in the direction of the well. I was walking with my head bent low. I had no thought in my mind, but something was being forced on me—worked on me—from within. Suddenly, I felt that something had given way in my head, as if the water from within was sprouting out forcibly in a stream through a garden hose, through a center in my head. I alone knew what I felt then; however, no sound as if something had snapped, was heard. The inner eye was seeing all this clearly ... It was the *Brahmarandhra* that had opened and that inner eye was seeing the whole *Brahmanda* (cosmos) clearly through that opening. By the water in the head, here, I mean the inner light. Like a powerful search light, or powerful beam projected itself through my *Brahmarandhra* ... With the opening of the *Brahmarandhra*, that is, on the head being broken, that *Brahma* (God) entered within, or rather the inner and outer *Brahma* became one.¹

What a marvelous account. This is perhaps the most detailed narration describing the stage of enlightenment.

The visions

In one vision, the entire cosmos came toward him and merged into his body. (This was the realization that he was beyond illusion.) In another, Baba burnt a dark person. Soon, there appeared an illumined figure (both were replicas of Kashinath). The dark figure personified the inherent evil tendencies, and the illumined, their virtuous counterpart. Kashinath then realized that he was beyond both and was actually the same as Sai. Several *siddhis* (occult powers) now started manifesting in Upasani of their own accord. He could read people's minds, describe events happening at distant places, and perform many miraculous feats.

The mission unfolds

On Guru Poornima 1913, Baba asked Chandrabai to worship Kashinath. From thereon, Kashinath came to be known as Upasani Maharaj and crowds started following him. Dejected by the constant suffering, however, and before the culmination of the four-year period of discipleship, the Maharaj left Shirdi quietly. He visited Shindi, Nagpur, Kharagpur, Poona, and Satana but returned to Shirdi for a period of seven months. Thereafter, he graced Rahata and Ahmedabad followed by another visit to Shirdi. In 1917, he moved to Sakori and assumed the role of an *enlightened* spiritual master. On December 24, 1941, the Maharaj left his body.

The chronicles of maharaj's life exemplify the journey from man to God—and the touchstone-like role of Sai in the process—and demonstrate the significance of suffering, surrender, faith, and patience. The process of subjecting raw gold through a furnace and subsequent chiseling and molding can be likened to the journey from *jiva* (ordinary being) to Shiva, a process that can be easily accomplished by the grace of Sai.

Source:

1. Antonio Rigopoulos, *The Life and Teachings of Sai Baba of Shirdi*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1993

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OUR TECHIE BABA'S MIRACLES

BY THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

Many consider Baba's role as being limited to showering spiritual blessings. The argument is certainly true, but not all-inclusive. While Baba's larger plan is to make us progress spiritually, He is also here to take care of our daily needs. Sai is the giver of both *bhukti* (worldly benefits) and *mukti* (liberation), the latter being the real goal.

A villager was traveling by train for the first time. Out of ignorance, he placed all the luggage on his head thinking it would ease the train's burden by not having to carry the extra weight. Would it have made a difference if he had put the luggage on the floor? In reality, the train was bearing the burden of both the man and his luggage, and where the weight was placed was immaterial. Our habit of worrying can be compared to this ignorant person, for, whether we realize it or not, God is like the moving train who is always carrying us forward (with the burden of all our worries and responsibilities). What is the use worrying then? We just need to place all our worries at His lotus feet. In one of His eleven assurances Baba has said, "If you cast your burden on me, I will certainly bear it."

The current issue of *Sai Sandesh* is a case in point. Weeks of preparation had gone into the writing of the *Beacon Lights* and *Editorial* articles. Unfortunately, the laptop storing those files crashed one night. (Translation: all Sai Sandesh files for the current issue were lost.) It was a huge blow (and also a lesson to not forget the human part of backing up), considering the deadline for submission was nearing.

Several rescue attempts failed and the computer wouldn't even start. Swami always comes to the rescue in such instances, and a strong inner voice asked us to wait until the following morning. The Sai Sandesh team decided to follow the intuition. The next morning, all attempts to reboot the computer were unsuccessful again. Sai was not to let us down so easily, however. Immediately, a strong inner voice again guided us with simple troubleshooting instructions. The instructions, though very unusual, were followed and the computer rebooted miraculously, with all files *intact*.

This wasn't an isolated incidence, though. Swami's guiding hand is always helping *all* his children. A devotee with no previous programming background was once forced to undertake a project in which he had to code a website using the programming language ASP (Active Server Pages). The devotee somehow managed to finish most of the work, but the application would not work.

Finally, after exhausting all his intelligence, efforts, and references, he sincerely prayed to Swami saying, "I am going to close my eyes and put my fingers on the "lower arrow" key to scroll through the code. Wherever I stop should be the place where the error is occurring." He then closed his eyes and scrolled for a few seconds. Much to his surprise, the problem was exactly at the line where he stopped. For several hours, the devotee had relied on his own intelligence and met with failure; however, the moment he invoked Sai's blessings—and expressed his sincere reliance on God, the task was accomplished within seconds.

Baba is always eager to help and will come rushing to our rescue when called. While Sai is always protecting and guiding everyone, many fail to recognize—or underestimate—his guiding hand and protection. Many attribute successes to their own efforts or intelligence. The truth, however, is that even the act of breathing cannot be accomplished without God's *infinite* grace. He who recognizes this truth and sees the hand of God in everything is truly blessed.

FAITH

SOURCE: OKA CHINNA KATHA

During the Second World War, a steamer carrying Indian Sepoys sunk as a result of bombardment by the Japanese. Many lost their lives. However, five among them managed to row their lifeboat and hoped to survive despite the surging ocean. They were tossed around for many hours.

One of them became desperate and cried, "The sea will swallow me. I will be a meal for the sharks." He drowned immediately. Another, wept for his family saying, "Oh, I am dying without arranging for my family's future." He, too, lost faith in his survival and died. The third sepoy thought, "I have with me the policy and documents of insurance. What a pity!" I should have kept them at home. What will my wife do? I am sure to die." He also died.

The other two men reinforced each other's faith in God and said, "We shall not yield to fear. We shall prove that however desperate the situation may be, God will certainly protect man if he has faith in Him." Even as they were talking like this, a helicopter sent from a coastal ship spotted these two men and hauled them to safety. After a safe landing they said, "It was only five minutes between victory and defeat. Faith earned the victory, while the lack of it caused defeat and death."

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WE ARE GROWING

Sai Sandesh is two this year! We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all our readers for their overwhelming support. It is our humble prayer to Swami to allow us to continue our *seva* for many more years.

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