



Shraddha Saburi.

SAI SANDESH

The official monthly newsletter of

OM SAI MANDIR

A NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION

45 11 Smart Street * Flushing, NY 11355 * (718) 461-0454 * info@omsaimandir.org * www.omsaimandir.org

March 2007



Love All. Serve All.

Volume 4, Issue 3



LIFE SIZE STATUES OF SAI BABA

Two life size, marble statues of Sai Baba will soon be adorning the temple's altar. Devotees interested in contributing toward this cause may contact the temple's management at 1.718.461.0454.

Checks could be made in the name of Om Sai Mandir and mailed to 45-11 Smart Street, Flushing, NY 11355.



FROM PAIN COMES PLEASURE

BY THE SAI SANDESH TEAM

Life has its ups and downs. Events in life occur in an almost circular fashion, periodically alternating between pain and pleasure and joy and sorrow -- mimicking a merry-go-round as if. Despite their unpopularity, unhappy moments of our lives play an important role in furthering -- shaping -- the spiritual growth of the *jīvātmā* (individual soul).

The darkest phase of night occurs just before sunrise, welcoming the light that is to shatter the reign of darkness. Painful moments in our lives, too, serve as precursors to their happier counterparts, and the peak of their intensity is a sure indication that the light of God is going to fill our lives with unending happiness and bliss.

When Swami, as a lad, made the divine declaration proclaiming His divinity, many disbelieved Him and even went to the extent of tormenting His physical form. They subjected His body to untold, unbearable suffering that cannot be described in words.

Through the entire ordeal, Swami smiled to prove to the world -- and to set an example -- that He is beyond pain and pleasure. Through this suffering, however, Swami's divinity shone like a million suns and He is now worshipped in every corner of the world.

The Guru Charitra narrates the wonderful account of a devotee whom the Lord Dattatreya visited in His physical form. The Lord appeared at the doorstep of the devotee in the form of a monk begging for food. The devotee was not at home and his wife attended to the needs of the Guru. On His way out, the Lord uprooted a vegetable plant that was the only source of meals for the family. When the wife discovered this, she was petrified and wailed inconsolably.

The devotee returned to find his wife bemoaning the loss. He was a true devotee, however, and explained to her the importance of equanimity in the wake of pain and pleasure, both products of our own actions. After the explanation, he tried to replant the tree and in the process discovered a pot of gold that was buried there. Had the Lord not inflicted the momentary pain, could the family have discovered the buried treasure?

Lord Krishna gave a unique demonstration about this truth as well. A brahmin devotee once came to seek His blessings.

On securing Krishna's blessings, the brahmin's cow (his only source of sustenance) died immediately. Arjuna was by Krishna's side when this happened and he did not lose the opportunity to question the strange occurrence.

The Divine One immediately explained that He wanted to grace the brahmin with divine blessings, a pre-requisite for which would be unconditional reliance on God. Reliance on one's own possessions would only hinder the divine blessings that were to fill the brahmin's life. In the worldly sense this event would be considered a tragedy, but in reality it served as blessing in disguise, for the brahmin's responsibility was being borne by the merciful Lord Himself.

In all the above stories, pain was the seed that planted the tree of happiness. In addition to serving as a fertile soil for long-term happiness, suffering has another benefit.

Ancient wisdom and seers often liken suffering to a furnace that molds gold. In order to mold raw gold into fine jewelry, it is subjected through the intense heat of a furnace. The intensity of the heat plays a critical role in softening and shaping the pure metal.

Once it softens, it becomes very easy to mold it into fine jewelry. Swami often calls His devotees "*bangaru*". In His eyes we are pure gold and in order to soften us and carve us into beautiful jewels that can be adorned by Divinity, we are often challenged by the fire of worldly trials and tribulations.

As painful as these challenges appear, however, they play a beneficial role in carving us into wonderful instruments of God. One need not go far to look for proof of this. Reviewing our own lives, we will find that the best of our qualities express themselves after the worst of circumstances.

Night and day, summer and winter, joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, suffering and happiness -- all of these represent opposites that constitute the dual nature of this universe.

One follows the other unfailingly, repeatedly reminding us about the fleeting nature of things and carefully reiterating the importance of equanimity (undisturbed state of mind in joy and sorrow) in our lives.

MIND BOGGLING MIRACLES OF SAI BABA: TIME IS HIS SLAVE

ADAPTED FROM *TAPOVANAM* BY JANDHYALA VENKATESWARA SASTRY

In the physical world, we are all bound by the laws of time and space. An avatar is not subject to such restrictions, for He not only transcends time, He actually rules over it.

A young Christian boy from Colombo, Sri Lanka, traveled to India for higher education. He enrolled himself in the Madras Christian College. During his stay in Madras, he happened to visit Sri Ramakrishna Mission and was instantly attracted to the image of Mother Kali.

After giving up all his possessions and severing ties with his family members, he set out on a divine quest. He literally adopted *sanyāsā* (renunciation) and dedicated his entire life to his favorite deity.

Genuine *sādhakās* (spiritual aspirants) always succeed in securing God's grace, and this *sādhakā* was no exception to this rule. Within a few years, he visited Puttaparthi. Swami immediately called the boy to His interview room. While they were in the room, devotees assembled outside heard a distinct cry: "Mother!"

Apparently, as soon as the lad had entered the interview room, Swami materialized a forest within the interview room and ordered him to walk in it. The young man started walking through it and continued to do so for decades together. After he had traversed a significant distance, Swami ordered him to stop. When he turned around, he saw the vision of his favorite deity: Mother Kali.

He could not hold his excitement any longer and cried in ecstasy. It was his long cherished desire to retire to the forests and undertake severe penance. Swami not only fulfilled this desire, he also helped him secure the vision of his favorite deity.

Swami, the master of time, had packed the time span of decades within an hour. Yes, the young boy had actually walked for decades, but Swami controls time and he condensed all these years into just one hour. After the vision, Swami spoke the following words: "My dear man, there is no need for intense penance in the *Kali Yuga* (The Age of Darkness). It is enough if you remember your favorite deity's name and incessantly intone it mentally. Only through *nama smaran* will you attain fulfillment." After declaring this truth, Swami materialized a lot of vibhuti, poured it over the young boy, and blessed him.

DEVOTEES' EXPERIENCES: OM SAI MANDIR OBTAINS NON PROFIT (TAX EXEMPT) STATUS

Swami has His way of favoring devotees. Om Sai Mandir has witnessed and experienced numerous acts of grace since its inception, and sincere desires of devotees have been fulfilled in myriad ways.

On May 06, 2006, the mandir witnessed another act of grace that will be cherished (with gratitude) in our hearts for years to come.

It was Easwaramma Day and the morning had started with abhishekam (ritual bathing of deities), Kakad Arati, (morning arati) and Rudram. This was followed by the chanting of Sai Sahasrānamavali (1008 names of Sai Baba). As soon as we finished chanting the 1008 names, the mailman arrived with a letter from the Internal Revenue Service.

We had received official recognition from the IRS as a non profit organization. The mandir was filled with excitement. The cause of all the excitement was not so much the tax exempt status, but rather the timing of the letter. Not only did the letter arrive on Easwaramma Day, it came at the precise moment we finished chanting Sai Sahasrānamavali.

SAI WISDOM

The happiness that man can derive out of worldly comforts is limited. It is utter foolishness to think that wealth and property, comforts and conveniences can bestow unlimited joy on you. None of these can give true happiness. Then how can it be attained? It cannot be attained from outside. It originates from the heart. The heart is the dwelling place of God. To experience true happiness, man should develop firm faith in God. Where there is faith, there is love. Only when man has love in him can he practise righteousness. Righteousness leads to truth which in turn leads to God.

Source: Thought for the day, Prashanti Nilayam, February 19, 2007

CHINNA KATHA (SHORT STORY)

Swami exhorts His devotees to follow two wonderful teachings: Love all, serve all and help ever, hurt never. These simple teachings summarize the essence of all religious precepts in the most practical and easy-to-practice manner.

A student of Swami had deeply imbibed these lessons and soon got the opportunity to practice them. It was the day of an important exam and the young student was on his way to the exam hall. On the way, he found a helpless patient.

The condition of this person was grave, and he was in immediate need of medical attention.

For the student, this test was bigger than the one he was on his way to, for he would have to make a choice between his future and the life of a stranger. The smart lad chose the latter and rushed the patient to the hospital.

After ensuring the safety of the stranger, he nervously hurried to the exam hall. He was very late for the test, but with faith in Swami, he tried to complete the exam to the best of his abilities. When he went for darshan, Swami immediately congratulated him on his choice and assured him of success on the exam.

The results were declared shortly thereafter and the young lad, true to Swami's words, had passed with flying colors.

This was an excellent lesson to demonstrate the truth that God always helps those who follow the right path. What a wonderful way to drive this truth.

LIFE SIZE STATUES OF SAI BABA

Two life size, marble statues of Sai Baba will soon be adorning the temple's altar. Devotees interested in contributing toward this cause may contact the temple's management at 1.718.461.0454.

Om Sai Mandir is a Non Profit Organization.

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.

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. Call 718-461-0454

PUJA SPONSORSHIP

Archana: \$11

Abishekam: \$51

Satyanarayana Vrata: \$81

Vahana Puja: \$15

Annadan: \$251

To sponsor pujas, call (718) 461-0454.

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 2007

Sat., March 03: Holika/Holi Poornima

Sun., March 04: Holika Poornima/Holi

Tue., March 20: Ugadi, Gudi Padwa, Cheti Chand (Telugu,

Kannada, Marathi, Konkani, Kashmiri, and Sindhi New Year)

Tue., March 27: Sri Ram Navami (Sita Ram Kalyan)

April 2007

Mon., April 02: Hanuman Jayanti

Sat., April 14: Baisakhi

Sat., April 14: Tamil New Year, Vishu (Malayali New Year)

Sun., April 15: Bengali New Year/Bohag Bihu

E-mail feedback, suggestions, articles, and experiences to saisandesh@omsaimandir.org

SRI GAJANAN MAHARAJ OF SHEGAON

By The Sai Sandesh Team

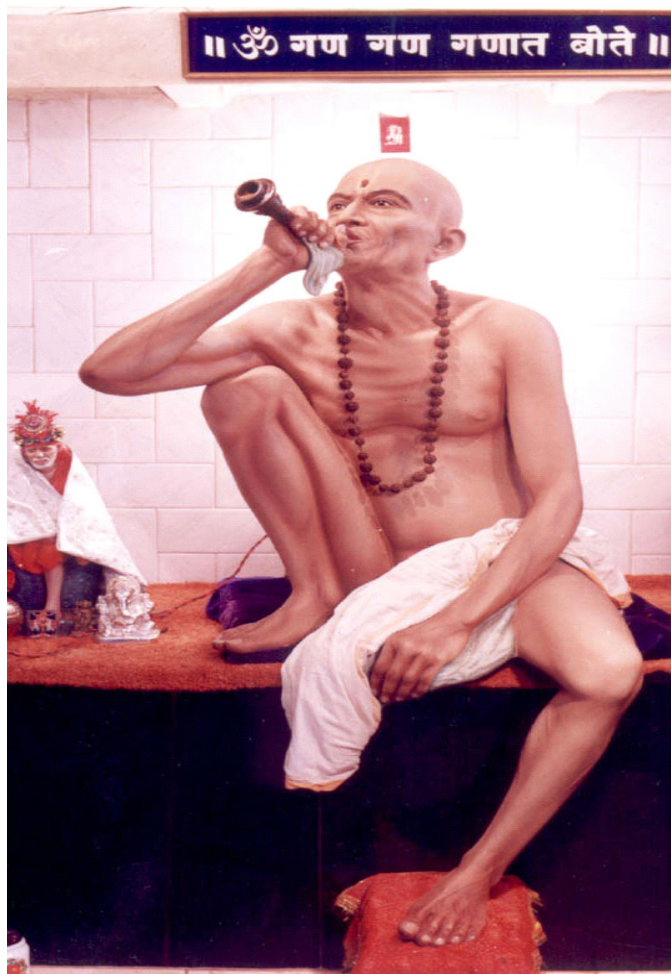


Image Credit: <http://www.gajanan-shegaon.com/>

Since ancient times, the holy land of India has been sanctified by the presence of spiritual powerhouses. Since early 1800s, a galaxy of spiritual luminaries has been manifesting on earth, preparing us as if for the advent of the Divine in human form -- Lord Sainath.

Shining in this constellation of spiritual lights was Sri Gajanan Maharaj of Shegaon. The account of Gajanan Maharaj's birth is as mysterious as the many miraculous acts of the saint. While different theories have been postulated to explain the origins of Sri Maharaj, records indicate that he first appeared in Shegaon as a young lad on February 23, 1878.

[It is noteworthy to mention that Gajanan Maharaj was a contemporary of over fifteen powerful saints, and there isn't much information available about the origin of all of these saints. Some well-known divinities of the time include Shirdi Sai Baba, Narsing Maharaj, Tajjuddin Baba, Madhavnath Maharaj, Anant Maharaj, Tembe Swami, etc.]

In stark resemblance to the life of Shirdi Sai Baba, Gajanan Maharaj, too, was discovered by a blessed devotee. A mon-cylender by the name of Bankatlal Agarwal discovered Maharaj while the saint was finding food from a heap of leftover *patrañalis* (leaf plates used in olden days). The saint's act was a practical lesson to illustrate the importance of respecting food.

Believers claim that Gajanan Maharaj was at the ashram of Akkalkot Swami Samartha (incarnation of Dattatreya) for some time. It is said that when the young lad was still on his way to Akkalkot, the incumbent Maharaj said, "Ganapati aala re aala" (Ganapati has come). After the initial meeting, Gajanan Maharaj was asked to seek training from Yashwant Deo Mamlatdar in Nasik. In Nasik, Gajanan Maharaj came in contact with the brightest of saints and spiritual scholars. He also came in contact with Narsing Baba of Akot.

While the Maharaj was performing *sādhanā* (spiritual austerities), Balshastri Gadge of Laad was impressed by the young boy and waited to invite him to Lad Karanjya in Vidhabha, a prayer that the young saint gracefully acceded to.

Gajanan Maharaj then spent a few years with Narsing Baba, a saint that fearlessly wandered in forests that were inhabited by wild animals. It is said that even the wildest of animals would become meek and loving in the presence of Narsing Baba. In his company, the Maharaj's yogic powers were fully awakened and he could perform many divine feats. Once, the Maharaj used his yogic powers to raise the water level of a well. Gajanan Maharaj soon moved to Shegaon.

Once, Bankatlal invited the Maharaj to his farm to eat corn stalk. Many devotees had assembled there to bask in divine company. A fire was soon lit to roast the corn. In the merriment that ensued, none (except Gajanan Maharaj) noticed that the fumes were reaching a bee hive on the tree. Disturbed by the heat, hundreds of bees started swarming

out. The devotees were panic-struck and ran for safety. Sri, however, was unruffled and did not move from his seat. The bees soon settled on his body and stung him in hundreds of places. This disturbed the devotees who were observing their beloved deity sitting undisturbed even in pain. As Bankatlal rushed to aid his lord, Maharaj ordered the bees as follows: "You go back to your own place. My dear devotee Bankatlal should suffer no pain." The bees obeyed.

All the devotees returned to their seat but were terrified at the sight of the Maharaj's body, for millions of stings had covered the saint's beautiful form. In consideration for their devotion, Gajanan Maharaj took a deep breath and wonder of wonders, all the stings fell out of his body.

Once, a group of [false] sages, in the pretense of earning money, were discoursing on the Bhagavad Gita. The group leader started his discourse by explaining that neither weapons could destroy the soul, nor could fire burn it. It was the [futile] intention of the band to divert the devotees of Gajanan Maharaj. While the lecture was in progress, a strange miracle happened. The Maharaj's bed suddenly erupted into flames. As the flames were rising, devotees started making rescue arrangements. Gajanan Maharaj dissuaded these attempts, however, and sat unruffled in the midst of the flames. Addressing the group leader who was apparently enjoying the sight, the Maharaj said, "Since you have been telling people for the last one hour that neither weapon can destroy nor fire can burn the soul, please come and prove it by sitting on fire." The leader ignored this order, so Maharaj asked some of his disciples to bring him by force. By now, the fake *sādhu's* ego was completely shattered and he sincerely repented for his behavior. Maharaj not only forgave him, but also gave him spiritual instructions. The fire extinguished as mysteriously as it appeared.

Sri Gajanan Maharaj shed his mortal coil in 1910. Two years before this, he had warned his devotees of the *samādhi*. Before giving up the physical form, however, he consoled the grieving devotees with the following words: "Don't think I am gone. I will always be there whenever you think of me. I will rest here." These were not hollow words. Even today, many devotees experience the continued presence and protection of the Maharaj.

[It is worth mentioning here that Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi always held Gajanan Maharaj in high esteem. When the Maharaj took *samādhi*, Baba told his followers "*Aaj mazga Gaja gela*" (my Gaja left today). There were incidences where Baba and Gajanan Maharaj fondly addressed each other as spiritual brothers. In reality, they were the same divinity functioning in two different forms. A *leelā* only they would understand.]

MAHASHIVARATRI: FEBRUARY 16, 2007



Om Sai Mandir

A Non Profit Organization

Om Sai Mandir is organized exclusively for charitable, religious purposes and is a non profit organization, exempt under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Contributions made to Om Sai Mandir are tax deductible and can be mailed to:

Om Sai Mandir
45-11 Smart Street
Flushing, NY 11355

or online: www.omsaimandir.org

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Have a suggestion, article, or idea for *Sai Sandesh*? Please e-mail our editorial team at saisandesh@omsaimandir.org

ADDRESS FORM (HELP US UPDATE OUR RECORDS)

First Name:

Phone:

Last Name:

Mobile:

Address 1:

Fax:

Address2:

Email:

City, State, Zip:

Please mail the address form to:

Om Sai Mandir

45-11 Smart Street
Flushing, NY 11355

Tel: (718) 461-0454

Email: info@omsaimandir.org

Website: www.omsaimandir.org