

Chavadi Procession - 100th Year Celebration at Shirdi

Any devotee going to Shirdi will first have darshan in Samadhi Mandir and then after devotees' step automatically proceeds to Dwarkamai and Chavadi. These two places give us feeling of Sai Baba's presence even today.

Actually, **Chavadi means a place for discussion to give justice**, but this Chavadi of Shirdi became a place of residence of God Incarnation - Sai Baba. Late Shri Nimbalkar has thrown some light on the reason why Baba started to sleep in Dwarkamai and Chavadi on every alternate day in his explanatory book of Shri Saitcharitra originally written by **Hemadpant (Govindrao Dabholkar)** in Marathi Language.

"Once due to heavy rain Dwarkamai was flooded with water and there was no dry space for Baba to sleep. So devotees took Baba to Chavadi which is situated nearby and Baba was taken back to Dwarkamai. Since then Baba started sleeping in Dwarkamai and Chavadi every alternate day."

Seeing this daily routine of Baba, **from December 10, 1909**, devotees started a tradition of taking a procession admist band and music from Dwarkamai to Chavadi. People used to clean lanes of Shirdi on the day on which Baba had to sleep in Chavadi. A mixture of cow dung, mud and water was sprinkled to prepare a uniform platform to draw rangoli. Torches were ignited on polls in lanes to enlighten Shirdi. Before chariot procession, devotees sang bhajans in Dwarkamai. Then Tatyia Kote Patil would come to Dwarkamai and requested Baba to proceed to Chavadi. Without Tatyia Baba would not stand up to go.

Baba wore His regular Kafni on His body, had Sakta under His arm and carring some tobacco and His pipe and placing a small piece of cloth on His shoulder, Baba started for Chavadi. Tatyia Kote Patil placed a embroidered Shela on Baba's shoulder. After that Baba Himself put some sticks in Dhuni to keep it burning the whole night and then Baba extinguished the lamp near Dhuni. With various sorts of music Baba started for Chavadi with His devotees. Devotees sang bhajans with melodious voice. The procession started with loud cries of "Sai Nath Maharaj Ki Jai" - "Victory Be Unto Sai"

Tatyia Patil was on Baba's one side and Mhalasapati on the other. Villagers of Shirdi and guests of Shirdi participated in this procession. Procession was led by devotees who played sorts of music instruments followed by Bhajan Mandali. Fully adorned Baba's horse Shyamkarna was placed in third position and beautifully decorated Palanquin (Palkhi) followed it. When procession reached near Maruti Mandir, Baba used to halt there for some time.

Baba used to look at Hanuman ji's idol and gestured something with His hands by moving them in various directions. Baba only knows the meaning of these strange gestures! After the procession reach Chavadi, Shej Arti was sung. At the time of Artis of Sant Jnaneshwar and Sant Tukaram, Sai Maa, Godly incarnation who came to this earth for welfare of this mankind, bowed Her head in praise. After arti was over, devotees returned to their homes. Baba slept in a room in Chavadi. A bhajan mandali used to accompany Baba in Chavadi. In the morning devotees would come and take Baba again to Dwarkamai. This was followed till Baba's Samadhi.

In the year 1937, Baba's devotee Shri Anna Saheb Chinchankar gave donation for repairs of this Chavadi.

Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan has maintained this course of Chavadi Procession till today.

Every thursday **Palkhi Procession** starts from Samadhi Mandir to Dwarkamai and from Dwarkamai it proceeds to Chavadi. Apart from thursdays, Sansthan organises Palkhi.

Procession on the first day of celebration of Ramnavami, Gurupoornima, Dashera (Punyatithi) and also on Mahashivratri and eleventh day of full moon phase of Ashadh month as per Hindu calender (July-August month as per English calendar).

Thousands of devotees - local and from all over the world participate in this incredible procession and make their souls satisfied with cries of Baba's name with deep devotion. The path on which procession passes is dawns with mixture of cow dung, mud and water with beautiful rangolis drawn. Few fortunate married women perform arti of Palkhi. Many famous music bands participate in this procession to make the atmosphere submerged in music, which is another form of devotion.

This year i.e. on December 10, 2009, the tradition of Chavadi procession will be completing 100 years. In this context golden moments of this procession will be celebrated by Shirdi Sansthan. These golden moments were started by taking Baba's potrait and padukas on December 10, 2008.

On this day, in the morning Baba's portait and padukas were taken to Chavadi in a procession to Chavadi. Chairman of Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan, Shri Jayant Sasane, Dr. Eknath Gondkar and Shri Suresh Vabable carried Baba's portrait and Shri Ashok Khambekar and Shri Krishnachandra Pandey carried padukas in the procession to Chavadi. Shri Jayant Sasane and Shri. Rajshri Sasani participated in portrait and paduka pooja which was followed by Abhishek pooja.

Chavadi was decorated by colourful flowers which were provided by Shri Vijay Kote and colourful lights were provided by Dwarkamai Mandal of Bombay. Mass reading of Shri Sai Nath Stavan Manjari and Chapter 37 of Shri Sai Satcharitra was done.

To give more importance to this tradition and to honour the devotees (volunteers) who play musical instruments on every Thursday in Chavadi procession, Shri Jayant Sasane and Shri Rajshri Sasane honoured them with Shawl, Coconut and a pair of clothes. On this occasion Shri Kishore More and all the villagers of Shirdi were present in big number. In the context of completion of 100 years, various programmes will be undertaken by Shirdi Sansthan throughout the year. A camp of 'Art of Living' by Shri Ravishankar, Bhajan Sandhya and Parayan of Shri Sai Satcharitra are the few plans of Shirdi Sansthan for this coming year.