



Making of Saibaba Idol

Balaji Vasanth Talim was born in 1888 in Hyderabad. His father Vasanth Rao was a building contractor for the Nizam of Hyderabad. His father died early, leaving behind his wife Saraswathi, and three small children who migrated to Mumbai.

After primary education Balaji joined the J.J School of Art to learn sculpture. He won the "**Dolly Khurshatjee**" scholarship thus enabling him to complete his education. Balaji was a brilliant sculptor and painter, portraits being his speciality. In **1918 'Thalim's Art Studio'** was established. He won many prestigious awards, gold medals, and accolades.

The committee for '**Beautification of Mumbai**' choose him to sculpt the statues. Mumbai is dotted by his sculpture from Flora Fountain to the High Court and everywhere else. The Britishers appreciated his work and gave him assignments. **Balaji was a highly spiritual, religious, philosophical and a man of principles.**

The Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan gave him the humungous task of sculpting Baba's idol. Meticulously he got his tools 'made to order' from iron-smiths and carpenters.

Zealously and full of religious fervour he carved Baba's Murthy. He hoped and prayed saying "If Sri Sai Baba gives me darshan while making His Murthy the Murthy will be worthy and the devotees also will have feelings of devotion". And sure enough he got Baba's

darshan in the studio while sculpting. The beautiful Murthy is world famous. It is worshipped by devotees who flock to the Samadhi Mandir from all over the world. Caste, creed and a social status is no bar.

The gates of the Samadhi Mandir are opened to everyone , the rich and the poor, sophisticated and the village folk all stand in the line from the wee hours of the morning to behold it. If the lines are too big devotees crain their neck and jostle for space to peep at it through the door in the rear or through the open windows of the Samadhi Mandir. Just a glimpse, a passing glance is enough to fill them with joy. Baba on His part looks, hears and blesses everyone. It is the most photographed idol in the whole world.

The height of the idol is 5' 5". The work is commissioned in 1952 and prathista took place in 1954. At the age of 82 on December 25,1970 he breathed his last. But Baba's Murthy in Samadhi Mandir lives on.