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1

Shirdi Sai Baba

God is not attracted to outer appearances but rather by the cleanliness of the inner self.

Shirdi Sai Baba

Sathya Sai Baba is widely known across the world today as the extraordinary avatar he is, but not very many people know about his past life as Shirdi Sai Baba when his spiritual powers and love were as extraordinary as they are in his current incarnation. The present-day Sathya Sai Baba has said that in his past life as Shirdi Sai Baba he was an avatar who embodied the Shiva energy; in this present life he is embodying the Shiva and Shakti (father and mother) energies; in his next incarnation, which will complete the triple avatarship, he will embody just the Shakti energy.

In reading about the life of Shirdi Sai Baba, you will experience the awesome power of a master who is one with the Eternal Self. After experiencing that, I don't think any person's understanding of life can ever again be the same. Hold on to your seatbelts, for you are about to experience the awesome love and power of Shirdi Sai Baba.

Sai Baba first appeared in the small town of Shirdi in India in 1872 as a boy of sixteen. The people in the town considered him a fakir, a Moslem holy man with no worldly cares or attachments. After wandering for a short time, he decided to spend the rest of his life in the small town of Shirdi.

Early on, a holy man passed through the town and said about Shirdi Sai Baba, "Watch that young fakir. He's a jewel on a dunghill." Little did the holy man or the people of Shirdi know what a jewel he was! Shirdi Sai Baba was to spend the next forty-six years, until his death in 1918, in this town, and as his renown grew, more and more people from all over India flocked to see this avatar.

As a very young boy he had left home to follow a Moslem fakir who became his guru. When that fakir died he had joined a Hindu guru whom he called Venkusa. It was in about 1900 that Sai Baba's fame began to spread throughout India. There are some wonderful stories about the events in this saint's life.

One time some visitors to Sai Baba had to catch a night train back to Bombay, but there was a raging thunderstorm. Sai Baba looked up at the sky and said, "Hey, enough of that! Stop it now! My children have to go back." The storm stopped.

On another occasion a husband and wife had gone to see Shirdi Sai Baba, but while there, the wife came down with cholera. The doctors in the town said the case was hopeless and that she would die. Shirdi Sai Baba gave her some virbhuti (sacred ash) to eat. Within thirty minutes she was doing better, and in a short time she was completely healed.

Another time a Hindu devotee was standing outside of Shirdi Sai Baba's mosque but wouldn't go in because he worshiped only Rama. He told his friends he would not bow down before Shirdi Sai Baba for this reason. All of a sudden, he went rushing inside and prostrated himself before Shirdi Sai Baba. When asked why he had changed his mind, he said that he'd seen Sai Baba standing there in the form of Sri Rama.

The interesting thing about Shirdi Sai Baba was that Moslems, Hindus, and persons of all other religions revered him and considered him their guru. That was unheard of at the time. Shirdi Sai Baba performed Moslem practices and Hindu practices, so no one knew which religion he identified with. Shirdi Sai Baba once referred to himself as a reincarnation of Kabir, the poet-saint of the fifteenth century who also embraced both Moslem and Hindu disciples. He convinced everyone that he was fully identified with whichever particular diety a given person warshiped.

A blind man went before Sai Baba and said, "I can't see." Sai Baba laid his hands on the man's head and his sight was restored. A blind woman made a passionate request to see Baba with her eyes. Her sight was immediately restored; however, upon leaving the mosque, her blindness returned because all she had asked for was to be able to see Baba, so by cosmic law, Sai Baba could give her only that.

A Hindu man's son had an extremely high temperature for six days, and he prayed to Sai Baba from another city. Sai Baba materialized in the room, gave him virbhuti, and said his son would be fine. Then he dematerialized.

Another devotee of Sai Baba had had several children but they had all died in infancy. He went to Sai Baba and told him of his misfortune, praying that one child would live. Sai Baba immediately said, "Why ask for one? I'll give you two!" The man had two sons and two daughters.

Sometimes it would be necessary to explain to an extremely sick person that a miraculous healing was not in the person's destiny and in the long run would only cause more suffering. Sai Baba would promise, however, to bring the person back in a new birth if he or she so wished.

A very attractive Moslem woman visiting him in the mosque took off the veil covering her face as she bowed before Shirdi Sai Baba. One of the devotees sitting beside him was thinking to himself that he would like to get another look at the beautiful woman. Sai Baba swung his stick around in a flash and smacked his devotee.

Sai Baba was completely omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, no matter how far away on Earth his devotees lived or were traveling. Sai Baba said in this regard, "I am not confined to Shirdi or to this body. I am everywhere you think of me."

Once Shirdi Sai Baba complained of a severe pain in his abdomen. He ordered his devotees to wind a cloth around his stomach and tighten it, and the pain finally passed. It came to be known that a female devotee had been experiencing painful childbirth and had prayed to Baba to relieve the pain. Sai Baba, of course, took the pain on himself.

Very often Shirdi Sai Baba asked for small amounts of money from certain devotees. When asked about this he said that he asked only those whom God told him to ask; in exchange, he would give them ten times as much. By accepting alms he was, by cosmic law, taking responsibility for those people. In the later years of Sai Baba's life an enormous amount of money was received from devotees. It was said that he made as much as the governor of a province. The authorities decided that they should tax Sai Baba. The only problem was that by the end of every day, everything that Sai Baba had received he had given away to the poor. When he died he had the equivalent of sixteen dollars to his name.

On one occasion he told a devotee to take care of his physical body for three days. He said, "I am going to Allah. Take care of this body for three days. If I return I will look after it myself. If not, bury it in that open land over there and put up two posts to mark the place." Sai Baba lay dead for three days and then returned and continued his life.

One time a devotee who was very poor was embarrassed because all he could offer Shirdi Sai Baba was a few almonds and sugar crystals when all the other devotees were offering so much more. To his amazement, when he took out his offering it had multiplied, and it was enough to feed all twenty-five devotees assembled in the mosque.

In 1911 a plague epidemic occurred in India, and Sai Baba began developing welts all over his body. Not a single person in all of the town of Shirdi was affected by the plague, for Shirdi Sai Baba had taken on the karma himself and manifested it through his own body in order to save the

town.

Another time Shirdi Sai Baba put his hand in the fire and severely burned it. His devotees grabbed him and pulled him out of the fire. In another part of India, a child sitting on her mother's lap had fallen into the fire and Sai Baba had pulled her out, saving her life and burning his hand in the process. Sai Baba never failed to protect his devotees wherever they were if they called to him.

Sai Baba often referred to God as the Fakir. For example, when a devotee was bitten by a poisonous snake and ran toward him, Sai Baba said, "Don't come up, Brahmin! Go back, get down!" (He was referring to the poison, although the devotee didn't realize it.) A moment later Sai Baba said, "Come up, now. The Fakir is gracious to you. You will recover."

One of Shirdi Sai Baba's main devotees received permission to bathe his head, for Sai Baba said that putting water on his head was as good as bathing his whole body. The devotee wanted to wash his whole body, however, and disobeyed Sai Baba's command, pouring all of the water in a large copper vessel over Sai Baba's head, expecting to completely drench him. To his amazement, Sai Baba's head was wet but the rest of his body remained completely dry.

This same devotee had a dream a year later in which Shirdi Sai Baba appeared and sprinkled rice on his bed in some sort of blessing. When he awoke there was rice all over his bed. He couldn't understand how this was possible since the door to his bedroom was bolted shut. He asked about it and Sai Baba said, "Do I need to open doors to get into rooms? I have neither shape nor size; I am omnipresent."

A man had offered half his salary to the Lord Dattatreya (an incarnation of Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva) and if he got a particular job he was seeking. He got the job but then forgot to keep the vow he had made. Years later he went to see Shirdi Sai Baba who immediately asked for fifteen rupees, the exact amount he owed the Lord Dattatreya.

One time some militant fundamentalist Moslems who didn't approve of Shirdi Sai Baba's openness to all religions armed themselves in front of his mosque, refusing to let devotees in to worship. A devotee who had come to worship prayed to Sai Baba from outside the temple. Shirdi Sai Baba walked outside and called him into the mosque. The armed militants were completely immobilized. Then they quickly dispersed in the face of such awesome power.

Another time there was a fire on the farm of one of his devotees, and it was starting to spread. His devotees prayed for his help. Shirdi Sai Baba walked over to a stack of leaves and sprinkled some water on them, saying, "The fire will die down now." And so it happened as he said it would.

On another occasion the villagers wanted to have a fair celebrating Ra-