

New Findings on
SHIRDI SAI BABA



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***New Findings on Shirdi Sai Baba
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Shri Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi

This chapter provides details regarding the highly auspicious day on which Shri Sai Baba took Mahasamadhi; his wish to be taken to the wada; donation to Laxmibai, his dream commands to continue his aarti; his last rites, puja and sandal procession by Hindus and Muslims; prior indications to devotees about his crossing over the ocean of worldly life; narration by two devotees about his last moments; and formation of a committee

The Highly Auspicious Day on Which Shri Sai Baba Crossed Over the Ocean of Worldly Life

Shri Sai Baba took Mahasamadhi on Tuesday, 15th October 1918, a highly auspicious day in both the Hindu and Muslim calendars. It was the ninth day of Muharram and it also happened to be the major Hindu festival of Vijayadashami. Furthermore, Ekadasi had just started. The significance of the date and time of Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi are listed in [Table 1.1](#) based on information reported in *Shri Sai Leela*.

Table 1.1: The significance of the date and time at which Shri Sai Baba took Mahasamadhi

English Date	15 October 1918, Tuesday
Marathi Date	Ashwin Shukl 11 Shaka 1840
Muslim Date	9 Mohorram Hijri San 1337
Parsi Date	5 Ardi Behast San 1227
Time of Maha Nirvana	Afternoon 2:35 (East Kal – Exactly 21 Ghati)
Nakshatra, Charan	Dhanishta Nakshatra 2 nd Charan
Yoga, Karan, Ritu	Shul, Gar, Dakshinayan, Sharad Ritu

Source – *Shri Sai Leela* (1983: 23)

Shri Sai Satcharita mentions about Shri Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi as follows:

Baba got a slight fever on 28th September, 1918. The fever lasted for 2 or 3 days, but afterwards Baba gave his food, and thereby grew weaker and weaker. On the 17 day, i.e., Tuesday, the 15th October, 1918, Baba left His mortal coil at about 2.30 p.m.

Gunaji 2002: 220

Yet another publication, *Sainath Prabha*, published in October 1918 ([photograph 1.1](#)), mentions that:

Shri Samarth Sainath Maharaj took Samadhi last Tuesday i. e. Ashwin Shukl 10 at 3 in the afternoon. Around 5–6 days prior to his Mahasamadhi, he stopped his daily routine like walking up to Lendi, going to Chawadi, going for Alms and conversing with people. Tuesday, that is the same day as Samadhi day, in the morning, got a vision, "I am here, haven't gone, perform the Kakad aarti, get up." After the afternoon aarti, everyone in the Masjid were asked to leave for their places for lunch. Sai Baba left his body around 3 in the afternoon. At that time, there were only 2 or 3 devotees with Baba, rest all went to their houses. He left his body at the place where he usually used to sit with his elbows on the railing. It is decided to keep his Samadhi in the building built by Bapusaheb Buti.

Sainath Prabha Kiran 10, 1918:

Shri Samarth Sainath Maharaj Prasann, self-translated

This seems to be accurate in view of the fact that an inscription behind the wooden door leading to the Samadhi Mandir mentions that Sai Baba left his mortal body in the Dwarkamayi at about three o'clock on 15th October 1918.

Moments before his passing away, Sai Baba's last words to Bayaji Appa Kote Patil and Laxmibai were to take him to the wada.

श्रीसमर्थ साईनाथमहाराज प्रसन्न.



माझी काय गेली खरी। परी मी आहे जगदाकारे ॥
नका करूं खटपट। ध्यानीं ठेवा मज नीट ॥ १ ॥

श्रीसमर्थ साईनाथमहाराज ह्यांनी गेल्या मंगळवारी म्हणजे आश्विन शुभा १० रोजी दुपारचे ३ वाजता समाधी घेतली. समाधी घेण्यापूर्वी ५६ दिवस त्यांनी आपली दिनचर्या म्हणजे लेंडीवर जाणे, चावडीत जण, भिक्षा मागणे व भक्तजनांशी संभाषण करणे बंद ठेवले होते. मंगळवारी म्हणजे समाधीचे दिवशी प्रातःकाळांत दृष्टांत झाला की "मी आहे, गेला नाही, काकडआरती करा, उठा" त्याप्रमाणे काकड-आरती झाली. दुपारची आरती झाल्यावर जमलेल्या भक्तांस मशिदीतून आपआपल्या घरी जाऊन जेवा, असे सांगितले. देहावसान दुपारी ३ वाजता झाले, त्यावेळेस भक्तांपैकी २१३ माणसेंच जवळ होती. बाकी सर्व आपआपल्या घरी होती. ज्या कठल्यापाशी समर्थ नेहमी बसत असत त्याच ठिकाणी बसून देह ठेवला. त्यांची समाधी श्री. रा. रा. बापूसाहेब बुटी यांनी दाखिलेल्या इपारतीत करण्याचे ठरले आहे. यासंबंधी सर्व सविस्तर हकीकत प्रमेच्या येत्या म्हणजे ११ व्या अंकात देण्यात येईल.

ही मृत्युलोकची वस्ती आहे, असे जाणून व समर्थ बाबांनी शिरोभागी लिहिलेल्या अभंगांत गुप्तपणे केलेला उपदेश मनांत आणून सर्व भक्तांनी श्रीसमर्थांच्या ध्यानांत नेहमी तत्पर राहिल्यास ते आपल्यास पदोपदी संभाळीत आहेत असा सर्वत्रांस अनुभव येईल. येवढीच सचना करून सर्व भक्तवृंदाची राजा घेतो.

संपादक, -साईनाथप्रभा.

Photograph 1.1: *Sainath Prabha* Kiran 10 (October 1918 ed.)

To Appaji he said, “*Mee jato meraku wadaku uchlun de sagale brahmana majuya jabalu rahteel*” (Swami 2006: 170).

[I am going. Carry me to the wada. All Brahmins will be living near me.]

And to Laxmibai, after giving her nine rupees and before leaving his body, his words were, “*Are ata malaa ithe vare vaatat naahi, vaanyat gheyun chala manjhe vare vaatel*” (*Shri Sai Leela* Issue 11, 1923: 79).

[Here I am not feeling well now, take me to the wada, I will feel better.]

While saying these words, He leaned on Bayaji’s body and breathed His last. Bhagoji noticed that, His breathing had stopped, and he immediately told this to Nanasaheb Nimonkar, who was sitting near. Nanasaheb brought some water and poured it in Baba’s mouth. It came out. Then, he cried out loudly “Oh Deva!” Baba seemed to open His eyes and say “Ah” in a low tone. But it soon became evident that, Baba had left His mortal body for good.

Gunaji 2002: 226

A different version of his last moments as recounted by a teacher in Shirdi, Usha Prabhakar Mule, is in an article published in *Shri Sai Leela* in the year 1983 – more than six decades after Sai Baba’s Mahasamadhi. It is based on information she received from Bappaji Laxmanrao Ratnaparkhi, a resident of Shirdi. According to his recollection, Sai Baba suffered due to fever from 3rd October and was in pain till 14th October 1918. On 15th October, as usual, he went to Lendi for the toilet, brushed his teeth, washed his hands and sat next to the pillar opposite the Dhuni. After some time, he went to his Devalya place. As usual he recounted stories on Brahma gyan and then asked for an early aarti. Jog and his wife performed Sai Baba’s puja and offered naivedya. After distributing Udi to all those who were present, he asked them to go to Dixit wada for lunch. It was approximately 1.30 p.m. at that time. Sai Baba asked Mhadu Fasle to make a pan beeda, which he placed on Sai Baba’s hand and gave water from the silver jhaari. Sai Baba tried to sip a little water but half of it came out. He then slowly rested himself on the shoulders of Bayaji Kote, who was sitting behind him, and then gave nine coins to Laxmibai. Through this, he conveyed that he had followed the paramarthic tradition of donation at the time of death.

By 2.30 p.m., his situation worsened and seeing his failing health, the five people present, namely, Bayaji Kote, Bhagoji Shinde, Laxmibai Shinde, Mhadu Fasle and Bappaji Ratnaparkhi, rushed to Dixit wada, conveyed the situation and

brought Dr. Chidambaram Pillay Nagpurkar back with them. The doctor took Sai Baba's hand and checked his pulse and observed that the atma of Shirdi had merged in the Universe (Mule 1983).¹

The day after Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi, at sunrise, Sai Baba appeared in Das Ganu's dream at Pandharpur saying:

The mosque has tumbled down. All the grocers and oil-merchants of Shirdi have harassed me. So I am now going away from there. Hence, I have come up to here. Cover me up in an abundance of flowers. O, do fulfil this wish of mine! Come! Come immediately to Shirdi!

Kher 2014: 696

Laxman Mama Joshi, on receiving a dream command from Sai Baba, "Get up soon, Bapusaheb thinks that, I am dead and so he won't come, you do the worship and the Kakad (morning) a[a]rti!" (Gunaji 2002: 227), arrived at the appropriate time and performed the aarti of Sai Baba in the Dwarkamayi Masjid on the morning of 16th October 1918. Then, in the afternoon, Bapusaheb Jog and others performed the aarti which also took place in the Masjid, as usual (Gunaji 2002: 227; *Shri Sai Leela* Issue 6 1923: 54).

Devotees Flock to Shirdi on Hearing about Shri Sai Baba's Passing Away

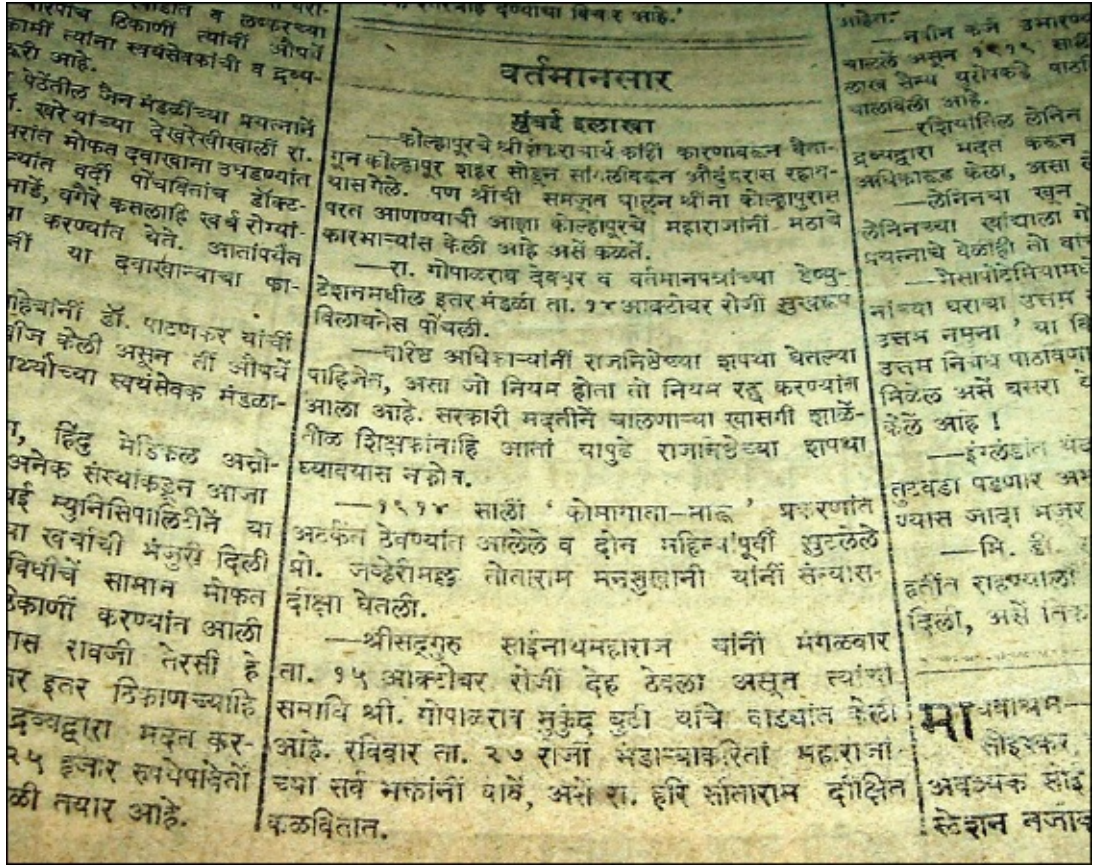
The news about the passing away of Sai Baba spread like wild fire in Shirdi and the nearby villages by word-of-mouth. In those days, use of telephone or even telegraph was a rare event. Postal mail was the fastest source of communication.

One of the earliest news items on Sai Baba's Mahasamadhi was published in the Pune edition of the famous newspaper *Kesari* on 22nd October 1918 on page 6 under the column "Vartmansaar" ([photograph 1.2](#)).

The news said:

Shri Sadguru Sainath Maharaj on Tuesday 15th October laid his body to rest and his Samadhi is located in Shri Gopal Rao Mukund Buti wada. Sunday 27th is a day for Bhandara, all devotees of Maharaj to come, as informed by Rev Hari Sitaram Dixit.

Newspaper *Kesari*, self-translated



Photograph 1.2: Newspaper Kesari 22nd October 1918: Bhandara on thirteenth day on 27th October 1918 as informed by H.S. Dixit

This news of Sai Baba’s taking Mahasamadhi spread rapidly and within no time thousands came to Dwarkamayee for a final darshan, queuing for five or six hours.

A photo of Sai Baba was published in the obituary in *Sainath Prabha* in November 1918 (photograph 1.3).

श्रीसाईनाथ महाराज.



ता० १५ आक्टोबर रोजी समाधिस्थ झाले.

सूचना.

ज्या वर्गणीदारांकडून अद्याप वर्गणी आली नाही, त्यांकडे पुढील १२ वा अंक व्ही. पी. नं. पाठविण्यांत येईल, तरी तो त्यांनी स्विकारण्याची मेहरबानी करावी. संपादक.

Photograph 1.3: *Sainath Prabha* Kiran 11 (November 1918), Obituary

Puja and Sandal Procession by Hindu and Muslim Devotees

Both Hindus and Muslims venerated Sai Baba and so both conducted his last rites in their own way. Bappaji Laxmanrao Ratnaparkhi, who was in Shirdi at that time, described the pujas and sandal procession to Mule as follows:

Baba's thirteenth-day function was held as per Hindu traditions organized by Mumbai based devotees, which included Kakasaheb Dixit, Kaka Mahajani, Moreshwar Rao Pradhan, Tarkhad, Sundar Rao Navalkar, Govind Rao from Pune, Rasne Kaka, Khagjiwale. Boondi ladoos were distributed as prasad by them. Seeing all this appeared as a day of jatra. Huge crowds gathered for prasad. Thirteen Brahmins conducted the puja. Each of the Brahmins was offered a dhoti, shawl and dakshina of ₹21. This puja was performed by Kakasaheb Dixit; Shri Balasaheb Deo was also present there. Sandal procession was carried out by Muslim devotees on the evening of 20th day and was followed by reading of Quran and Namaz prayer.

On the 40th day, Dasganu performed a 3-day puja festival. One thousand devotees were fed food. Pandit Shastriji from Pandharpur was invited for the puja. Brahmins were offered silver pela (tumbler) and clothes. One such pela is still with Ratnaparkhi.

On the 60th day, Shri Upasani Maharaj went to Kashi and performed hawan as per Vedic rituals and gave alms or donations. Like this the Mahanirvan puja was completed. However, the Light is still present here in invisible form.

Shri Sai Leela 1983: 27², self-translated

Prior Indications to Devotees about Shri Sai Baba Crossing Over the Ocean of Worldly Life

Sai Baba gave several indications about his Mahasamadhi in different ways. Some of these are outlined here.

- Two months earlier, Sai Baba sent a message to fakir Banne Mia, saying that:

Navdin, nav tarikh: Allah meyane apna dhunia le jayega, merji Allaki.

Shri Sai Leela 2007: 47

[Ninth day, Allah himself takes away the lamp which Allah has placed.] *Navdin nav tarikh* meant ninth day of the ninth month. Sai Baba's passing away was actually on the ninth day of the ninth month.

- He also sent some offerings to the fakir Shamsuddin Mia with a request to do two types of devotional singing called moula (vocal singing of songs about God) and kowali (beating of the table and singing songs about saints). He also requested nyas, that is, preparing food and feeding the people (Swami 1994c: 174–175).

Thus, right until the final moments of leaving his body, Sai Baba was embracing both Hindu and Muslim communities.

- In 1916, at the time of Seemolangan and Dussehra day, Sai Baba had indicated the importance of Vijayadashami for crossing over the “border of the ocean of worldly life” by hinting that for this “Dussehra is the only auspicious time” (Kher 2004: 694). While he told Ramchandra Patil (Kote) that “in the year 1918, in the month of Ashwin (October) during the sun's southerly passage, on the Vijayadashami day, in the bright half of the moon, Tatyā will go to his Eternal Abode” (Ibid).

When the month of Ashwin began, Tatyā was bedridden and suffered high fever. He was “unable to walk or move about” and the “illness was taking a turn for the worse. . . . Then came dashmi . . . the pulse grew feeble as Tatyā lay dying” (Ibid: 695).

However,

The danger to Tatyā's life was averted. Tatyā remained while Baba it was, who passed away, as if in exchange for Tatyā! And see the marvel of Baba's words! He took Tatyā's name, but was really making ready for his own niryan, without missing the exact time, even by a second. And yet he had given the warning, bringing to the notice of all, the future event. But until it happened actually, no one had realised it.

Ibid: 696

- Sai Baba also appeared in the dream of Mrs. Pradhan who lived in Santacruz, Mumbai giving her intimation about his Mahasamadhi.

On 16-10-1918, i.e. the night after Baba's departure, I saw his body in a dying condition in my dream and said "Baba is dying". Baba replied, "People do not talk of saints as dying, but as taking Samadhi." His body was still. People were mourning. Such was the dream. I felt sad. I woke at 12.30 midnight. In the morning we got from Anna Chinchnikar, a card that Baba passed away at 3 p.m., on Dusseraha 15-10-1918.

Swami 2006:110

- Some days before his departure:

There occurred an ominous sign foreboding the event. There was, in the Masjid, an old brick on which Baba rested His hand and sat. At night time He leaned against it and had His Asan. This went on for many years. One day, during Baba's absence a boy who was sweeping the floor, took it up in his hand, and unfortunately it slipped and fell down and broke into two pieces. When Baba came to know about this, He bemoaned its loss, saying: "It is not the brick, but My fate, that has been broken into pieces. It was my life-long companion, with it I always meditated on the Self, it was as dear to Me as My life, it has left Me today."

Gunaji 2002: 228

- Similarly, it is a practice among Hindus, that when a person is about to die, religious scriptures are read out to him in order to help him get detached from the worldly things. Sai Baba, as he knew that he was about to pass away soon, asked one Mr. Vaze to read a book named Ramvijay to him. Mr. Vaze used to read the book once in the week. Then, Sai Baba asked him to read it again, day and night. Vaze completed reading the book, for the second time in three days. Thus, eleven days passed like this. He read it again for three days and hence got exhausted. Then, Sai Baba let him go and did not say anything after that. He then abided in his own self, waiting for the last moment to arrive (Gunaji 2009: 225).

Shri Sai Baba's Final Journey: Interment in Buti Wada

After a few hours, the question arose regarding what to do with Sai Baba's mortal remains. Some Muslims, including a Muslim butcher of Bandra, Mumbai, requested that the body of Sai Baba be kept in Samadhi, outside the mosque in

the open space, outside Lendibagh (Gokhale 2004: 64). Khushal Chand and Amir Shakkar also supported this along with Shama. However, the village officer, Ramchandra Patil, who headed the group, insisted and took a firm decision that Sai Baba's last words be respected and that he be buried in Buti wada only. Discussions regarding this went on.

At that time Kakasaheb Dixit became upset and asked all those present to collect two lakhs of rupees for the temple construction. He requested them that in case they wanted the Samadhi to be made outside, they should sign documents as an assurance for donation of the money. No one expected this suggestion and, therefore, bickering followed among everyone. Seeing the state of confusion, Kakasaheb Dixit sent a telegram to the Collector of Ahmednagar to render help and solve the problem. Accordingly, Shri Sane, the local Mamlatdar, was ordered to handle this issue.

So, the Mamlatdar himself passed such an order, and Baba's body was buried without any difficulty at But[i] wada, where it still remains. That was only a temporary settlement. The more important matter was as to the guidance of the future. That should be a scheme sanctioned by the District Court of Ahmednagar. H.S. Dixit, with his remarkable legal ability, his worldly wisdom, and great bhakti, drew up a scheme and presented it with the signatures of a number of influential devotees. That was sanctioned by the District Court in 1922 and that governs the Shirdi Sai Sansthan and [Sai] Baba's tomb and other affairs. The property of the Sansthan [was] vested in a body of trustees with a managing committee of fifteen, Dixit contented himself with being the Honorary Secretary, and his able management pleased all the parties. H.S. Dixit thus laid firm foundation for the success of the Shirdi Sai Sansthan, and he must be given the credit for its present position.

Swami 1994b: 176

Since Shri Sai Baba had expired intestate, examination of his body and writing of panchanama was conducted by Santaji Patel Shelke, the Police Patil of Shirdi. Shri Sane also took possession on all articles left behind by Sai Baba. Thereafter, Sane put to vote the issue of taking Sai Baba to Buti wada or to an open graveyard. The result showed that 1, 503 voted in favour of Buti wada and 730 were in favour of an open graveyard. Ramchandra Patil, who was an active participant in this vote, reportedly conveyed this to the writer of Nirvanicha Sakha in 1964. Finally, paying due respect to Sai Baba's last words, it was decided that Sai Baba's body would be taken to Buti wada.

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