



NEW YEAR MESSAGE 2006

Shirdi Sai Baba of the past has become a phenomena of today.

This can safely be stated on the basis of the unexpected and amazing number of activities happening around in India and the world towards the propagation of the path He had shown. It is seen that in the last few years the Shirdi Sai Sansthan at Shirdi has expanded its activities multifold. This is somewhat expected given the fact that an average of about 40 to 50 thousand devotees visit Shirdi everyday. On important days it is a few lakhs. What is amazing is the construction and opening of hundreds and hundreds of Shirdi Sai Baba temples and other related institutions in India and abroad through the self-motivation of the devotees. Would one historically examine the way in which temples have been created by devotees following other paths, it would become clear that usually the main trust (like the Shirdi Sai Sansthan at Shirdi) opens its branches at other places as the first step. Then the main trust and the branches take up temple construction projects which includes planning, financing, constructing and supervising etc. But in name of Shri Sainath Maharaj, self-motivated devotees and groups are themselves creating resources, constructing temples and carrying out a number of other religious and charitable activities. No doubt such self-motivation is a result of the existing spirit of Shri Sai.

Most of Baba's devotees are emotively linked with Him and are prepared to undergo any amount of hardship and sacrifice to do a task in His name. The rate at which the number of His devotees and institutions are multiplying is simply astounding. There are a large number of publications about Baba in various languages in the form of books, journals, magazines, book-lets and the number runs to thousands. Devotees are ever avid to know more and more details about the past of Baba as also the happenings of today relating to Him. There are a large number of web-sites on Baba in the internet.

Notwithstanding these multi faced activities, one important aspect which is

necessary to spread the name of Shri Sai Baba is prominently lacking. That is, serious research on Baba, using the modern research methodology is much below the desired standards. Some scholars from India and abroad, independently or through research institutions, have made substantial contribution in research and some books and research findings in the form of articles have been published. However, a study of these volumes would indicate that the researchers/authors have not had access to many of the important documents published during Baba's time and there-after. This is because initially most of the books and articles written on Baba were in Marathi language and later English versions or original writings in English came to market. There is hardly any library that has a comprehensive collections of literature on Baba.

To undertake serious research, a good library maintaining the required documents like books, journals, newspaper items, manuscripts hand-written notings, photographs, paintings, sketches, maps, research papers and well maintained bibliography is a must. Unfortunately no such library is in existence, to enable the researches on Baba to undertake serious study. Some devotees, particularly the writers, are in possession of some of the important documents but what is needed is to create a single forum/ body that possesses and maintains this for posterity. It should be the endeavor of each devotee to collect all such records of the past and maintain them properly for use by future researchers. That would be a great contribution for Baba's cause. Let us resolve to work towards this end in the New Year to come.