

First Guru Purnima celebration in Shirdi

The great good fortune of being the first to formally worship fell to Sri Noolkar upon a Guru Poornima day. Sri Noolkar first visited Shirdi in 1909 (Sai Satcharitra Chapter 31 & Saipatham Magazine August 2002) and he passed away in March, 1911. But Sri M. B. Nimbalkar mentioned in his writings that as per Dr.Gavankar's opinion Noolkar first visited Shirdi in 1908 and therefore first Guru Purnima was held in 1908. With the above mentioned reasons Gurupoornima might have started in Shirdi in 1908 or 1909 or 1910. Noolkar wrote a letter to his friend Nanasaheb Chandorkar describing first Gurupoornima celebrations in Shirdi. In that letter he mentioned "As I awoke on Saturday, I remembered that it was the day of Guru Poornima. We immediately started preparations for the pooja.... From this letter it reveals that first Gurupoornima was held on Saturday. As per Lunar Calendar, Gurupoornima day had fallen as follows.

Year	Month	Date	Day
1908	July	13	Monday
1909	July	3	Saturday
1910	July	22	Friday

As per Noolkar's letter Saturday's Gurupoornima will come only on 1909. So, we might say in Shirdi first Gurupoornima Celebrations held on Saturday, 3rd July, 1909. (Source: Saipatham Magazines August 2002 and July 2003.)

Noolkar first visited Shirdi in 1909. He was one of the most intimate devotees of Baba. Baba would never allow anyone to worship him. He would not allow any devotee to even garland him. The great good fortune of being the first to formally worship fell to Sri Noolkar upon a Guru Poornima day. One day Sri Tatya Saheb Noolkar went to the masjid and saluted Baba. As he did so, Baba pointed to the pillar besides the dhuni and said "You worship that pillartomorrow." Noolkar could not understand why Baba had said so. When he returned to the Wada he conveyed Baba's instructions to Shama and asked him as to what Baba's intentions were in ordering him thus. Even Shama could not understand why Baba had asked them to worship the pillar next day. He went to the masjid to inquire of Baba but Baba merely reiterated his earlier instructions. Later Baba repeated the same instructions to Tatya Kote Patil and Dada Kelkar too. The next day happened to be a Saturday. As Noolkar awoke from sleep he suddenly

remembered that it was Guru Poornima day. He conveyed this to Shama and the other devotees. They got the almanac to check and it was confirmed that it was indeed so. That day was Guru Poornima. They now understood the meaning of Baba's words when he told them to worship the pillar. They were all very happy that Baba had finally permitted them to worship him. They all went to the masjid and begged Baba to allow them to perform the worship of their guru. Baba merely told them again to worship the pillar. "Oh our God! Why should we worship the pillar when we have you, a God, in front of us? We will worship only you." Baba did not agree to be worshipped by the devotees. The devotees stuck firmly to their resolve. At last Baba had to acquiesce to the wishes of his devotees and allow them to worship him. Baba always surrenders to the feelings of love and faith of his devotee. He said, "All right" at last, and the happiness of his devotees knew no bounds.

They immediately started preparing for the worship of the Guru. They decided to worship Baba after he returned from his round of alms and informed him thus. Baba, with utmost kindness, not only agreed but also permitted them to worship him using the sixteen articles of formal worship. Baba sent word to Radhakrishna Ayi and Dada Kelkar. She sent the various ingredients used in worship to the masjid and Dada Kelkar also reached the masjid with the various articles used in worship. All the devotees present did congregational worship of Baba. Baba returned all the dakshina offered to him back to the devotees. Arati was offered after the worship. Thus the first Guru Poornima worship was performed at Shirdi.

Sri Tatya Saheb Noolkar wrote a brief note to his friend Chandorkar about the first celebrations of Guru Pooja during Guru Poornima, as Chandorkar was not present at Shirdi at that time. This letter was published in Sai Leela magazine but unfortunately the date was not mentioned. This is a free translation of that letter.

"As I awoke on Saturday, I remembered that it was the day of Guru Poornima. We immediately started preparations for the pooja. Baba had permitted us to worship him after he returned from his round of alms. He did not object and kept silent when we worshipped him with the sixteen ways of worship. He returned all the dakshina given to him back to the devotees after the worship was over. We sent word to Radhakrishna Ayi and Dada Kelkar that worship of Baba and arati were being done in the masjid. Ayi sent various articles for pooja. Dada Kelkar too came with his pooja articles and participated in the pooja."