

## **SRI SHIRDI SAI BABA TEMPLE OF AUSTIN**

### **VISITING THE TEMPLE**

The Temple sits on four and a half acres of a nine acre lot owned by the Temple in Cedar Park, a suburb of Austin, the Capitol of Texas, the largest of the 48 contiguous United States. Almost 8,000 square feet of building sit on the lot. It was built in accordance with vastu, the ancient Indian science of architecture, making the building and grounds in harmony with the universe.



## Highlights of the Temple



### **Ganapati Shrine**

After parking, most people like to first take the darshan of Ganapati, who sits in a shrine directly in front of the Temple. Many devotees remove their shoes and circumambulate the shrine three or more times for good fortune.

### **The Main Temple**

After visiting Ganapati, it is fastest to go through the front doors to the Main Temple. However, wise devotees know it is more auspicious to enter through the NE corner side doors, on the right hand side as one walks towards the Temple from the shrine.



Navagrahas (Nine planets)

**Navagrahas**

As one enters through the NE corner doors, on the left hand side are nine small vigrahas, one for each of the “navagrahas” (nine planets). These navagrahas are thought to control each human’s destiny. It is considered auspicious to circumambulate the navagrahas on entering and leaving the Temple.



Sri Shirdi Sai Baba Moorti (statue)

**Inner Sanctum.**

At the front of the Temple is a 5'5" tall white marble moorti of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba. Baba is considered both a human saint and living God by His devotees. Devotees come and pray to the Moorti, not feeling that they are praying to a statue, but to the living God Himself. Many people come and touch Baba's feet, and then circumbulate Baba one or more times, by walking clockwise around Baba.

**Office and Bookstore.** A small bookstore with the Sai Satcharitra (story of Baba's life) and other books and recordings of Vedic chanting are available in the front lobby of the main building.



### **Dwarkamayi**

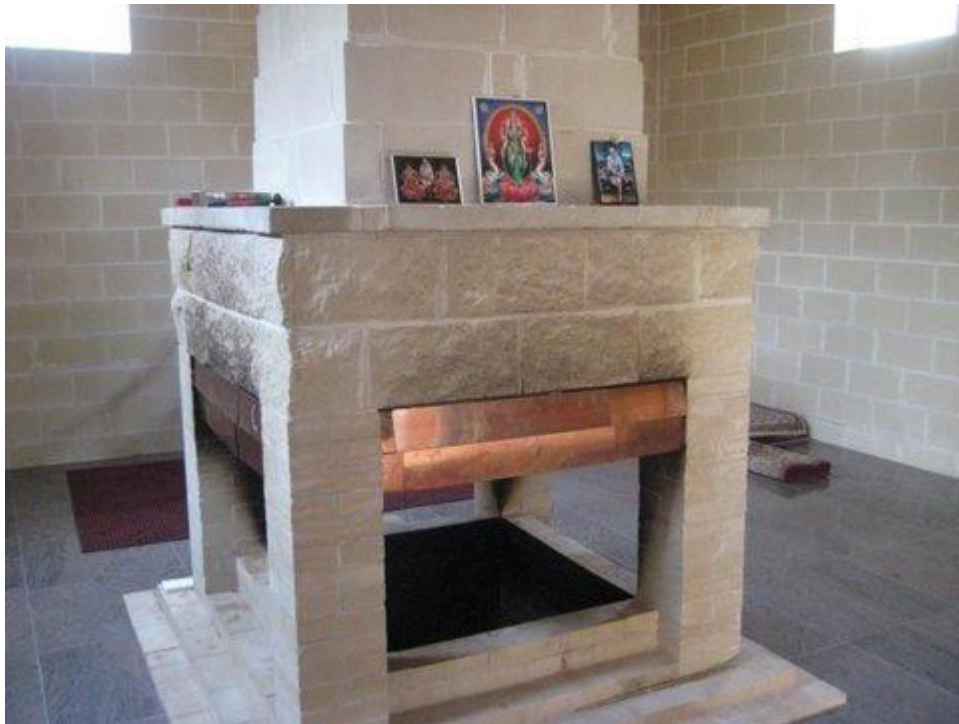
In Shirdi, Baba always kept a fire called a “Dhuni” burning 24 hours a day. Although Baba passed in 1918, this fire has burned continuously in Shirdi. The Temple also keeps a fire burning 24 hours per day. Above the fire is the “Dwarkamayi” picture of Baba, which is a reproduction of a famous portrait of Baba, hung in the mosque in which he lived and often referred to as the “Dwarkamayi”.

Small vigrahas (statues) of Lord Hanuman and Lord Krishna are also kept in this area.



### **Deepa Sala**

Behind the Dwarkamayi is a deepa sala, a place to light deepams (lamps). Lighting a deepam is an auspicious way to celebrate a birthday or anniversary, to commemorate a loved one, or send a thrill of joy into the universe.



### **Homa Kunda**

Across from the Dwarkamayi is the Homa Kunda Building. This is used for traditional Vedic havan, or fire offerings. In the Dwarkamayi sits a large granite Ganapati. It is auspicious to circle the homa kunda in a clockwise direction, and also to pay respects to Ganapati when the Homa Kunda building is open.



### **Meditation Hall**

Directly behind the Main Sanctum is the Meditation Hall. This hall is used for quiet meditation. In this hall is a smaller white marble moorti of Sri Shirdi Sai Baba. Before this Temple was built, services were held for more than two years in a nearby shopping center. This smaller moorti was worshipped with great enthusiasm four times a day. Many persons remark on what a powerful Darshan this Baba has. On one occasion, when Baba was worshipped with 100,000 rose petals and namas (chanting His name), tears of joy came from Baba's eyes in front of about 100 people.

**Kitchen and Restrooms.** On the opposite side of the Temple from the Homa Kunda building, sit the restrooms, separated by a hallway from the kitchen. The Kitchen is an important part of the Temple, as Prasadam is served here. About 500 meals a week made for devotees here, but also thousands of meals for the hungry and homeless in the Austin area are also made there.

**Shanti Pond.** No visit to the Temple, especially for children, is complete without a visit to the pond. The pond sits behind a black metal fence next to the entrance from the street to the Temple. It is considered auspicious to visit the pond before leaving the Temple. The pond is the home to 13 large Koi and 1 large goldfish. The pond is in the northeast corner of the Temple, which is a Vaastu feature, bringing good luck to the Temple and its visitors.

### **Worship**

The central worship of Baba is called Aarati. Four different Aaratis are performed every day, each taking about twenty minutes. One begins at 7:30 am, one at 12:00 Noon, one at 6:45 pm, and one at 8:00 pm. Aaratis are sung in Marathi, the language of Maharashtra, the language in Shirdi, where Baba resided most of his life. Books with translation and transliteration of the Aaratis are on the right side of the Temple as one faces Baba. The fulltime priests lead Aarati. They will also perform Archana upon request (chanting of Baba or other deity's name 108 times) either before or after Aarati.

### **Festivals**

Major festivals celebrated by the Temple include Siva Ratri, Ram Navami , Guru Poornima, and Vijaya Dasami (Dasara).

### **Start of Temple**

Kumbhaabhishekam (Grand Inauguration) of the Temple was March 19 -21, 2010. The Temple began regular worship on Makara Sankranti, January 14, 2008, in the Railyard Shopping Center in Cedar Park, and shifted to the new location on March 19, 2010.