

Lesson Plan: Sai Baba of Shirdi



Grade Level: Middle School

Subject: Religions of the World

Duration: 55 minutes

Learning Objectives

- Understand the life, teachings, and miracles of Sai Baba of Shirdi.
- Explore the concepts of tolerance and inclusivity in Sai Baba's message.
- Discuss how and why humans are sometimes turned into gods, and the rituals/processes involved.
- Collaborate in groups to synthesize and share knowledge.

Materials Needed

- Printed handouts (biography, miracles, teachings, inclusivity, deification)
- Station cards with discussion prompts

- Chart paper/markers or digital collaboration tools

Lesson Structure

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

- **Warm-up:** Ask students if they know anyone who is considered a saint or revered figure in any religion.
- **Objective Sharing:** Briefly outline what will be learned about Sai Baba of Shirdi.

2. Background Text: Sai Baba's Life (Read Aloud or Handout, 5 minutes)

Sai Baba of Shirdi (c. 1838–1918) was a spiritual leader revered by both Hindus and Muslims. His early life is mysterious, but it is believed he was born to a Hindu Brahmin family and later adopted by a Sufi fakir. Around 1858, he settled in Shirdi, Maharashtra, India, where he lived until his death. Sai Baba wore a Muslim cap, lived in a mosque he named "Dwarkamai" (a Hindu name), and welcomed people of all backgrounds. He was known for his simple lifestyle, meditation, and empathy for the poor and sick. Over time, his fame spread, and Shirdi became a major pilgrimage site^{[1][2][3]}.

3. Geography: Where Did Sai Baba Travel? (3 minutes)

- **Map Activity:** Show or describe a map of western India.
 - Sai Baba spent most of his life in and around Shirdi, Maharashtra.
 - He occasionally wandered in nearby villages and forests but did not travel far from Shirdi^{[3][4]}.

4. Station Activities (25 minutes total; 5 minutes per station, students rotate)

Divide students into five groups. Each group starts at a different station and rotates every 5 minutes.

Station 1: Miracles of Sai Baba

- **Text:** Sai Baba is believed to have performed miracles such as healing the sick, lighting lamps with water, stopping storms, multiplying food, and saving those in danger. His miracles attracted people from all backgrounds and strengthened their faith^{[5][6][7]}.

- **Prompt:** Why do you think miracles are important in religious traditions?

Station 2: Teachings of Sai Baba

- **Text:** Sai Baba taught the importance of faith (*Shraddha*) and patience (*Saburi*), love, forgiveness, charity, helping others, and devotion to God and Guru. He discouraged discrimination and emphasized inner purity over ritual^{[2][8][9]}.
- **Prompt:** How can these teachings be applied in your own life?

Station 3: Tolerance and Inclusivity

- **Text:** Sai Baba welcomed people of all religions, castes, and backgrounds. He lived in a mosque but named it with a Hindu term, and his famous saying was “Sabka Malik Ek” (“Everyone’s God is One”). He encouraged unity and respect among all people^{[2][10][11]}.
- **Prompt:** Why is tolerance important in a diverse society?

Station 4: Becoming a God – Process and Rituals

- **Text:** After Sai Baba’s death, devotees built temples, performed rituals (like aarti, abhishekam, and processions), and began to worship him as a saint or even as an incarnation of God. Rituals include singing, offering food, and visiting his tomb (samadhi). This process of deification happens when followers believe someone’s life and actions are divine^{[2][12][13]}.
- **Prompt:** What qualities make someone worthy of being worshipped?

Station 5: Discussion – Human to God

- **Text:** Many religions have examples of humans being turned into gods or saints through stories, miracles, and rituals. This often involves collective belief, storytelling, and the establishment of places of worship.
- **Prompt:** What are the benefits and challenges of turning a human into a god?

5. Jigsaw Collaboration (10 minutes)

- **Re-group:** Form new groups with one member from each station.
- **Task:** Each student shares what they learned at their original station.

- **Group Challenge:** As a team, create a poster or digital slide summarizing:
 - Sai Baba's life and geography
 - One miracle story
 - One key teaching
 - How he promoted tolerance/inclusivity
 - How and why he became deified

6. Class Discussion & Reflection (5 minutes)

- **Whole-class share:** Invite groups to present their posters/slides.
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - How do Sai Baba's teachings relate to modern ideas of tolerance?
 - What did you find most surprising about the process of deification?
 - Can you see similar patterns in other religions or cultures?

7. Closure (2 minutes)

- **Summarize:** Highlight Sai Baba's message of unity and love.
- **Exit Ticket:** Each student writes one thing they learned about tolerance or inclusivity from Sai Baba's life.

References

- ^[1] Britannica: Shirdi Sai Baba | Biography & Facts
- ^[2] Wikipedia: Sai Baba of Shirdi
- ^[4] shrisainivas.com: History of Shirdi Sai Baba
- ^[3] Shree Saibaba Sansthan Trust: History
- ^[5] Slideshare: Shirdi Sai Baba Angelic Powers and Facts
- ^[8] Sri Datta Sai Spiritual Centre: Sai Baba's Teachings
- ^[12] Dharmik Vibes: Shirdi Sai Baba Temple – A Divine Pilgrimage
- ^[6] Real2Real: Miracles of Sai Baba (YouTube)

- ^[13] Speaking Tree: 11 Assurances of SAI BABA
- ^[10] Sabrang India: Sab ka Malik Ek: Sai Baba and pluralism within Hinduism
- ^[7] visitshirdi.com: Miracle and wonders of Sai at Dwarkamai
- ^[9] Liquisearch: Sai Baba of Shirdi - Teachings and Practices
- ^[11] The Federal: Banishing Shirdi Sai Baba, or battling Hinduism's inclusivity

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2. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sai_Baba_of_Shirdi
3. <https://sai.org.in/en/history>
4. <https://www.shrisainivas.com/history-shirdi-sai-baba.jsp>
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12. <https://blog.dharmikvibes.com/p/shirdi-sai-baba-temple-a-divine-pilgrimage>
13. <https://www.speakingtree.in/allslides/11-assurances-of-sai-baba-to-his-devotees>