

Shirdi Sai Baba's Lendi Bagh - The Heavenly Garden on Earth

S.D.K. SUBHASREE¹, Dr. A. RENUKA²

¹Department of History, Govt. Arts College, Salem-7, T.N, India

²H.O.D, Associate Professor, Department of History, Govt. Arts College, Salem-8, T.N

Abstract -- Lendi was the name of a little stream on the outskirts of the village. Hence the land nearby was called "Lendi Bagh" by Baba. Baba was rather rigid in this routine, and every day He made His rounds in the morning and afternoon to Lendi Bagh, often accompanied by His Bhaktas, Butti, Bhagoji and Nimonkar but He entered the garden alone and spent some time. Lendi Bagh is situated on the North East corner in Shirdi. It is Vaikuntha (Heaven) on earth.

I. BABA'S GRACE TO MORESHWAR PRADHAN

Baba loved the Neem and Ashwatha (peepul) trees immensely. He watered them daily. Just as Lord Krishna stood under the Banyan tree, Baba stood under this peepul tree and gave instructions to many a devotee. One day Baba stood under this tree and pulled Moreshwar Pradhan towards him. He then took a handful of corn from his pocket and gave it to Pradhan to sow. Baba then sprinkled some water on it. Pradhan and whole lot of devotees did the same. This leela resulted in two incidents. One was that Pradhan bought this bagh and presented it to Baba. The other joyous incident was that the devotees started taking Baba in procession to and from Lendi Bagh. The board above the gate reads, "Moreshwar Pradhan Che Lendi Bagh."

II. GARDEN OF TREASURE

Lendi bagh is a treasure trove, sanctified by the dust of Baba's feet and the solitary time he spent there each and every day. This garden was full of trees and flowering plants like Parijata, Champa, Chameli, jui and jai. These were just a few of the plants thriving there. Indeed up to the 1980s this garden had a beautiful entrance which was a canopy of flowering bougan villaea. On the left of the entrance there was another rose garden where deer and rabbits roamed about.

III. SACRED TREES IN A GARDEN

The trees were Aamra (Mangoe), Ambore (tarvad an indigenous tree), Arista (neem), Ashwatha (peepul), and Audumbar (umbar). In Hindu Mythology these trees are considered holy, as a deity is supposed to reside in many of these trees. The above mentioned trees are believed to represent Brahma, Vishnu, Shankar and Aumkar Swarupa Ganapati. If you take the vowels of the Marathi language from these trees it forms Aum. The 'aa' from Ambore, represents Vishnu, the 'U' from Audumbar represents Shankar and the 'm' from Malka or Nemba Vraksh represents Brahmadev. From Aamra the ardha Matra of 'aa' and the bindu from Ambore represents Brahma kaal roop. The akar, makar, ardhmatra and bindu form an Aum, and this is Sai Baba, who like the destroyer of difficulties, Ganapati is ever present at Shirdi.

IV. BABA'S WALK TO LENDI

Lendi Bagh was about an acre in length and breadth. Lendi was a small, very old and famous river. It flowed underground and then emerged in Lendi Bagh. There it divided the Garden into two parts. In Lendi Bagh it flowed slowly and more like a stream. The water was scanty for most part of the year. Baba went to Lendi Bagh, daily and every day he threw some silver coins in the Lendi. Baba tested his devotees to see if they hankered after money and gold. Once he asked Purandare to accompany him to Lendi Bagh. Together they went to the Lendi stream and stood near the bank. The Baba showed him three dazzling plates of gold. The plates were in the stream and Baba pointed to them. Jyotindra was another devotee that Baba took to the Lendi stream. He showed him lumps of gold and asked him to take as much of it as he wanted. Jyotindra was not at all concerned. His only concern was to be with Baba and develop spiritually. Although Baba was surrounded by devotees, he kept a rather strict schedule. He went to Lendi Bagh at about 8 a.m. and again at about 3 p.m.

V. BABA PACIFYING THE VARUNA – THE DEITY OF RAIN

The musical band would be ready and waiting for him. He always entered Lendi Bagh alone, while the band and the devotees would return. Baba entered Lendi Bagh through the west. He also sat facing the west with his back to the Nanda Deep. Abdul Baba brought pitcher of water for him which he threw in all directions and chanted something. The Lord of the West is Varun alias Mitra (or Sun). Varuna is the deity of Rain and rules over water, wells, rivers, etc. He is the judge of the cosmic power and delivers justice by punishing wrong doers and liars. He is happy when he is worshipped and everyone should turn to the west and pray to him. This is done in the evening with water by pouring a thin stream or sprinkling it. Then we should ask to be forgiven for our mistakes and wrong doings. Rishis took water in the palm of the hand and cursed a person by throwing it at him. During Baba's arati the priest blesses the congregation by throwing water in all directions. Baba could be pacifying Varuna by sitting facing the west and throwing water in all directions along with incantations and chants. The lesson here is that we should pray to Varuna every day. The vehicle of Varuna is Makara (Crocodile) which represents the hand of time. Time is ticking away, so use it fruitfulness and spare this life for Self-realization. Kaal or time is fast approaching us with outstretched hands to grip us mercilessly as time waits for no one.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE OF LENDI BAGH

Baba like a gardener went to the Bagh to nurture the plants. The plants are his devotees and he pulled out the weeds. The weeds are symbolic of the evil tendencies that pull us in different directions. Another explanation could be Pitruyana or the journey of the soul after death. It is believed that the soul travels to Chandra loka which is full of happiness, if the person has dug a well or developed a garden. Just as we are unable to do this our forefathers might not have done this. After death of a parent we are supposed to perform certain rituals on a daily and yearly basis. For example, every day we are supposed to feed the crows and perform a yearly Shradha. Often we are unable to do this. Thus, it becomes the Sadhguru's responsibility to see that our journey is smooth. He also teaches us what has to be done to have a smooth journey. So he might have dug the well and developed the Lendi Bagh. There were many fragrant flowering plants in the 1920s. There were many peacocks, deer, rabbits, mongoose and birds. The Lendi Bagh was like this up to the 1980s. But now with the Shirdi Sai Baba

Sansthan's beautification plan, the Lendi garden has gone through many changes. Now the devotee can see a portion of the Lendi garden landscaped and a waterfall being present in the entrance of the Lendi garden.

VII. NEEM TREE

To the left of the Nanda Deep there were two Neem trees. These trees were planted by Baba. Unfortunately, both these trees died and hence one of them was cut from the base. The other neem tree was cut and over the stump a creeper is being grown. The botanical name of Neem is Azadi Rachit Indica. In Sanskrit it is known as Nimba which means bestower of health. The Hindu mythology says that Amrit (Ambrosia) fell on the neem tree. Another myth is that the Sun took refuge in it to escape the demons. The Neem tree symbolizes Devi Roopam (Goddess) Purusha and Prakriti are inseparable. In the case of all Gods (Saguna Roopa was given by us). This being represented by male and female roopa. Whereas Sai Baba is Paripoorna Parabrahma, so there is no separate roopa of Prakriti. Thus unlike other Gods, he does not have a female counterpart.

By sitting under the neem tree he is conveying to us that "Maya which is his own creation, is totally under his control and he conditions it." This Maya cannot act upon him as it would act on us. But having taken a human form to be in this Universe, he too needs Maya. The whole of the Universe, the Cosmos, and Maya was created by him. The only difference is that Maya is under his control unlike us who are under the control of Maya. It is believed that worshipping the Neem tree bestows Ayu (longevity), Shri (prosperity), Yasha (fame), and Viaya (victory).

VIII. NANDA DEEP

Baba lit this Akhand Nanda Deep. When exactly it was lit is not known. In those days it was placed in a pit and Abdul Baba looked after it. Abdul Baba states that Baba sat with His back to the "Jyoth" and from there the lamp was not visible to Baba. Daily Abdul brought pots of water and placed them near the Nanda Deep and Baba poured water in various directions. In 1942, Galvankar built a platform over which the Nanda Deep was mounted. Later it was placed over a marble pillar and shielded with glass case and protected from the elements. During the beautification plan of Shirdi Sai Baba Sansthan in the year 1998, it was placed in the present container.

In Mahanarayanopanishad it is explained that Fire is the life of all living beings. The Light eradicates and wards off all obstacles in our Sadhana Marga and protects everyone under its care. Hence, it is a practice followed by many Sai Devotees to do 108 Pradakshina of Nanda Deep.

IX. BABA'S WELL

The well is situated in the middle portion of Lendi Bagh. It is adjacent to the western wall of Lendi Bagh. With the help of his devotees, both rich and poor, Baba dug this well. He used to drink water from this well and he called it Budki. The water of this well was famous in the vicinity for driving away fevers and many diseases. Previously the devotees used to take water from this well and it gradually dried up. In 1983 A.R.Shinde deepened this well and water was found in abundance. There were two wells in Shirdi in those days. One was on the left side of the existing stairs of the Samadhi Mandir (this one does not exist anymore) and the other one is in Lendi Bagh.

X. THE DATTATREYA MANDIR

Dattatreya Temple was built by two local devotees who would like to remain anonymous. The Pran Pratistha of the idol of lord Datta and marble padukas was performed by the Sansthan in August 1976. There is an Audumbar tree behind the temple. The pujari from the Gurusthan looks after the temple. In the morning there is mangalsnan, Shringhar and the clothes are changed. Bhog is offered three times a day. Silver padukas were installed here on Datta Jayanthi on 12th of December, 2008. On Datta Jayanti, pujaris from the Samadhi Mandir do arati to Lord Datta. The devotees do pradakshina of this temple and get their wishes fulfilled.

XI. THE SAMADHI OF SHYAM KARAN

Shyam karan was the name of the horse or ashwa of the ashwamedha. The rinanubandh between Shyam karan and Baba were deep. As every arati he danced with joy and after the arati was the first to bow to Baba. Baba then applied Udi to his forehead and then gave the rest of the bhaktas Udi. The horse symbolises the whole cosmos bowed before Baba and danced with joy when Baba was worshipped. This horse was housed in the room situated on the eastern side of Dwaraka Mai, now called Shyam Sunder hall. The trainer Khajgiwale saw that the horse was well looked after and decked with all the trappings that are now exhibited in the museum. Shyam karan was taught to stand in front of

Baba, climb the steps of Dwaraka Mai and do namaskar to Baba and later to Baba's Samadhi.

After Baba's Mahasamadhi, he attended the aratis in the Samadhi Mandir and bowed to Baba's Samadhi. On chavadi procession days he led the procession dancing all the way to the chavadi. Shyam karan died in 1945. His Samadhi is in Lendi Bagh.

XII. SAI BABA'S LENDI ROUTE

Baba went to Lendi Bagh twice daily in procession with musical accompaniments. After a small darbar at about 9.00 a.m., he went along with his dear and near devotees. Nanasahab Nimonkar was usually on his right, Gopal Rao Butti at his left, Bhagoji Shinde at his back holding the embroidered umbrella, while the chopadars in their bright uniforms accompanied him and did Lalkari. They would come out of the Dwarakamai and after walking a few steps, Baba stood leaning against his Dwarakamai for a short while. Then they proceeded to the corner in front of Gurusthan. Here Baba stood facing the Gurusthan and made gestures with his right hand. The Bhaktas staying in Sathewada would eagerly await the procession and then prostrate before Baba. They then made a left turn and proceeded to Pilaji Gurav's house. Here Baba rested against this house for a while. Padukas were installed at this sacred place. Then they went past the Vittal Mandir which is opposite to Seva Dham. From there they proceeded towards Kanif Nath's Mandir making a right turn. This Mandir is blessed because Baba sometimes visited it. This Mandir is opposite to the post office. After proceeding a little further they walked adjacent to the Nagar-Manmad highway. Baba always entered Lendi Bagh Alone. While the Procession of devotees waited outside. Baba returned to the Dwarakamai from Lendi Bagh by the same route.

REFERENCES

- [1] Vinny Chitluri., Ambrosia in Shirdi-Part 1 (Baba's Leelas Before 1918., Sri Sai Baba Mandir., Korhale., Rahata., 2002.
- [2] Vinny Chitluri., Baba's Gurukul-SHIRDI., New Delhi., 2009.
- [3] Ramalingaswami., Ambrosia in Shirdi., 1984.
- [4] R. N. Kakarya., Shirdi within and Beyond., 2013.
- [5] Anand, Swami Sai Sharan., Shri Sai Baba., trans. V. B. Kher, New Delhi., 1997.

- [6] Arthur, Osborne., The Incredible Sai Baba., Calcutta., 1957.
- [7] Khaparde, Ganesh s., Shirdi Diary of the Horible Mr. G. S. Khaparde., Shirdi., 1994.
- [8] Murphet, Howard., Sai Baba: Man of Miracles., London., 1971.
- [9] Williams, Alison., Experiencing Sai Baba's Shirdi : A Guide., Shirdi., 2002.
- [10] Kevin R.D. Shepherd., Sai Baba of Shirdi-A Biographical Investigation., New Delhi., 2015.