

# Appendix C - Shirdi And Samudra-Manthan

*Shirdi Che Sai Baba - Dr. Keshav Bhagwant Gavankar*

## APPENDIX-C

### SHIRDI AND SAMUDRA-MANTHAN

It is said that there was a sea of 'fresh' water in the south of Vindhya mountain range. Vishnupant Karandikar had written an article in 'Kesari' Newspaper dated 17 August 1934, in which he had supported this by giving various proofs.

Madhav Vishnu Sahastrabuddhe, Sub overseer, Contractor, Shirdi, corroborates the above statement and says that the evidences can be found in the environment around Shirdi, which confirm the existence of fresh-water sea. He further adds that it must be between the area which is occupied by the present Krishna and Godavari rivers. He says, that the churning of the sea (Samudra Manthan), in mythological times, must have taken place in this region only.

Basically, churning of the sea was done to acquire the Amrut, ambrosia (It is believed that he, who drinks this nectar, escapes death). Sea of fresh-water was then called as 'Kshirsagar'. The process of churning was carried out by the Gods and demons. In the beginning, what emerged was incisive and pungent poison. Then they compromised on one condition. Those, who would accept the poison, would have privilege to acquire ambrosia. God Shankar took the poison, so Gods had privilege to taste ambrosia. But demons too wanted to share. Therefore Bhagwan Vishnu had to appear in the form of 'Mohini', to distribute the nectar. Gods and demons were made to sit in two separate rows. The two demons, Rahu and Ketu, intruded in the row of Gods and sat at the tail-end. The Sun and the Moon pointed out this deceit to God Vishnu who then killed Rahu by cutting his throat with the sharp edge of gold-pot.

The body of Rahu, without head, can be seen even today in a temple, in the town Rahuri (Nagar District), about forty kilometers away from Shirdi (The author of this book has visited and confirmed this fact). Temple of Ketu is situated in a village, Ratangad, which is nearly sixteen kilometers from Rahuri. Only the head of Ketu can be seen in that temple. (The story of 'Churning of Sea' Samudra Manthan is given in "Padma-Puran", Chapter 8, 9 and 10).

The name 'Ratangad' is quite appropriate as the fourteen 'Precious Gems' emerged from churning of the sea (Gem means, Ratna in Marathi). The name seems to be the derivation of those gems or Ratne. The origin of river Pravara (meaning, especially excellent) flows through Ratangad. This river is also known as 'Amrut Vahini'. Amrut is a Marathi word for ambrosia. It is believed that the ambrosia which was swallowed by Rahu, streamed out from Ketu's mouth. That flow of 'Amrut' turned into river Pravara.

Again it points out to the reference of the old mythological story. One of the fourteen gems was 'Amrut, ambrosia'. So the town was recognized as Ratnagad or Ratangad. Temple of Shankar, who drank the poison, is at Mouje-Ghatshiras, Mahal Pathardi, District Nagar. It is a legend that God Shankar was sitting there (Ghatshiras), when He drank the poison,

Haalaahal. All these spots are in Nagar District and not far from Shirdi.

During 'Samudra-Manthan' Sri Vishnu had taken the female form, Mohini who distributed the ambrosia amongst Gods and demons. We find the temple of God 'Mohiniraj' at Newase (real name Nidhi Niwas), which is approximately forty kilometers away from Shirdi. Four precious gems that merged from the sea were taken into possession by Sri Vishnu, namely Laxmi, Koustubh, a Conch and a Bow. At Newase, we can see the idol of Vishnu whose left half of the body is feminine, which represents Laxmi. So God Vishnu, (Mohiniraj), is also called by the name, Ardha-Nari-Nateshwar. Even now, the attire, which is put on the idol is symbolic. Half portion of it is adorned with man's wear and other half with woman's dress. In Dnyaneshwari, (Chapter 18), saint Dnyaneshwar has referred to Mohiniraj with the name Mahalasa or Mahalaya. He wrote the sacred book at Newase. The author has seen the pillar, sitting by which he wrote it.

Another five gems that were obtained from sea were given to God Indra. Those were, 'Airawat' (an elephant), 'Kamadhenu' (wish-fulfilling cow), 'Rambha' (a beautiful woman), 'Parijatak' (a flowering-tree), and 'Dhanvantari' (expert in Medicine). The place where Dhanvantari Ashwinikumar stayed became famous by the name 'Ashvi'. The place (Sthana) of Indra is today's Belapur. This name is a derivative of Bilweshwar. (This information is gathered from a book, 'Aamcha Nagar Jilha' (Our agar District) written by Hari Ganesh Parakhe, in 1931. He was B.A., L.B. and a Chairman of District School Board)

It is already mentioned above, that Bhagwan Shankar had to accept the two gems, Poison (Haalaahal) and Moon. His temple is at Ghatshiras. When moon emerged from the sea, it was placed on the earth. That place is still known as 'Chandgaon' (town of the moon) and Bhagwan Shiva there, is called as 'Chandreshwar'. God Surya-Narayana (Sun god) had taken only one gem namely a Horse with seven heads. The place of this God Sun is Kolhar. (Refer: The same book, written by Parakhe)

We know the story of Jarasandha, a king of demons, in Mythology. He had attacked Mathura of God Krishna 18 times. His town was Jorve, in Sangamner Taluka. One old resident of Jorve, named Eknath Gopal Sonar, had following information when October 1937.

"Aaba Devu Mahar was resident of Jorve. One of the beams of his house measured 18 Feet (216 inches) long and its circumference was 24 inches. (1 inch = 2.54 centimeters). It was a one-piece beam. Surprisingly the beam was not made up of wood but it was a long single bone. I have seen it with my eyes".

Aaba Mahar had no descendent. So the beam was thrown into Pravara river after his death. The town was ruined by Jarasandha. The signs of the destructions were gathered from utensils, which were found in upside-down condition in excavation.

About 50 k.m. away and to the west of Shirdi there is town Nandur Madameshwar. It is in Niphad Taluka. Irrigation Department dug a canal from river Godavari and dam erected 1908-09. While the digging was in progress, they found skeleton, which was 70 Feet in length. It was a human skeleton. Using seven bullock-carts, each 10 feet long, in series, it was sent to Mumbai by the Mamlatdar of the district. Keshav Bala Patil of Nimgaon and Gangadhar Vishnu Kshirsagar, a telegram-master living at Sonewadi, working in Irrigation Department, along with many others, had seen that huge skeleton.

In 1937, Shri Kane, Mamlatdar and Shri Nande asked about the unusual skeleton, but they had no satisfactory information regarding the matter. All these towns Rahuri, Ratangad, Newase, Belapur, Ghatshiras, Ashvi, Chandgaon, Kolhar, Jorve and Nandur-Madameshwar fall in Nagar District. This proves that there was fresh-water sea in this region in mythological period. Churning of the sea and distribution of the gems also took place here. All these places are not very far from Shirdi. Geological survey supports the existence of such sea in this region. Above interference is again supported by a scripture, "Godavari-Mahatmya". A saint poet Parsharam has written in his poetry about Samudra-Manthan which has taken place in today's Maharashtra. He was a contemporary Shahir (Refer: See Lavani number 127 By Parsharam)

Why Sai Baba chosen Shirdi as his domain is better understood when one comes to know the mythological background of Nagar (Ahmednagar) district.

## **END OF APPENDIX C**

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