

# Siddhachal Chha Gau Yatra (Fagun Sud Teras)





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One of the most auspicious days to undertake pilgrimage (yatra) of Shatrunjaya is on the thirteenth day of the bright half of the month of Fagan (February – March). Every year on this day, thousands of pilgrims perform the Chha Gau Yatra. Pilgrims are of the belief that performing this yatra will free the devotee from all sins.

Chha in Gujarati means six and Gau is equivalent to two miles, so in total the distance covered is about twelve miles (15 Km). The route is the longest and most arduous, some over hilly terrain, taking pilgrims to many lesser known but very auspicious sites on the Shatrunjaya Hills. The dress code is white clothes and the yatra takes four to five hours to complete.

The yatra starts after exiting the Rampol Gate, where there is a paved route on the right side of the road. Below are details of the auspicious sites the pilgrims visit enroute.

## **DERI OF DEVAKI'S 6 SONS**

The first temple pilgrims reach is that of “Devakishatnandan” – meaning six sons of Devaki. Devaki, as per the Ramayan is wife of Vasudev and mother of Krishna, but before giving birth to him, she had six other sons. Krishna was destined to kill Kansa, the king of Mathura. When Kansa came to know about this, he resolved to kill Devaki's sons as they were born. According to Jain belief, Kansa could only lay hands on six dead bodies. It is said that Salsa, wife of Nagdutta was very pious, undertaking many austerities, summoned Harinigameshi (a demi God), who came and said “O Salsa, its not in your destiny to give birth to living ones but you will have them anyhow to bring them up”. The story states that Harinigameshi swapped the living sons of Devaki with those of the dead ones of Salsa.

All six sons took diksha under Shree Neminath Bhagwan and achieved salvation – Moksha near this location.

## **ULKAJAL**

The second site pilgrims reach is Ulkajal point. It is believed that water used Shree Adinath Bhagwan's abhishek gets collected at this site. Nearby are the footprints of Shree Adinath Bhagwan.

## **AJITNATH & SHANTINATH SHRINES**

Further ahead of Ulkajal, pilgrims stop and do darshan at shrines of Shree Ajitnath Bhagwan and Shree Shantinath Bhagwan, who both stayed at Shatrunjaya during Chaturmas – four months of the rainy season. To mark this auspicious event, temples were built facing each other. As the story goes, Muni Nandishen during the time of Shree Neminath Bhagwan (some say during Shree Mahavirswami Bhagwan) once visited Shatrunjaya Giriraj and was performing chaityavandan in front of one of these temples, which meant that he had his back at the other one. He composed “Ajit Shanti Stotra” in praise of both these two Tirthankaras. On reciting this miraculous prayer, both temples moved and came next to each other.

## **CHANDAN (CHILLAN) TALAVADI**

The pilgrim next come to Chillan Talavadi (lake), named after Chillan Muni. He is considered to be a disciple of Pundarikswami – Chief Ganadhar of Shree Adinath Bhagwan ( some say he was a disciple of Sudharmaswami – the fifth Ganadhar of Shree Mahavir Bhagwan. Chillan Muni, together with a large group of pilgrims visited Shatrunjaya Giriraj. On the way, the pilgrims became very thirsty, unable to proceed without water. It is said that the Muni with his Labdhi – special powers created a pond of clean water. The pilgrims could thus quench their thirst and complete their pilgrimage. People named it Chillan Talavadi and in due course of time the name has changed to Chandan Talavadi. While repenting for the water souls, Muni recited Iriyavahiya sutra and became enlightened with Kevaljnan.



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## **SIDDHSHILA**

Siddhshila is near Chandan Talavadi. 'Siddh' means one who has attained liberation and 'shila' means rock. Infinite souls have attained liberation in Shatrunjaya Giriraj. It is believed that Siddhshila is such a place from which the highest number of souls have attained liberation than any other place on Giriraj. Pilgrims stop here and do 'Kaussage' of 108, 27, 21 or 12 logassa in sleeping position on Siddhshila. For some pilgrims this meditation can be difficult as it has to be done at about noon, when they are fully exposed to the sun and water is not permitted.

## **BHAADVA HILL**

The scene and surroundings for the pilgrims is mountainous. The path leads to a slopy hillock known as Bhaadva Hill. On this very hill, Krishna's chief queens Rukmini and Jambvati's sons respectively Pradhyumna and Shamba attained liberation along with 8.5 crore monks on the auspicious day of the thirteenth day of the bright half of the month of Fagan. Chha Gaun Yatra is performed in memory of this auspicious event.

The story associated with this is as follows. "Once upon a time, when Shree Nemnath Bhagwan visited Dwarika City, Krishna enquired about the fate of this city. Shree Nemnath replied that Dwarika city would be destroyed as per the 'niyana' (niyana is a wish or a favour desired intensely in exchange of all penances by a devotee) made by 'Dwaipayana Rishi'.

Pradhyumna and Shamba developed aversion to worldly pleasures on hearing the discourse by Shree Nemnath and renounced it along with many others. Following the burning of Dwarika City and death of Krishna, monks practiced penance more intensely with more unattachment to the material world. They moved from place to place – 'vihar' – and reached Shatrunjaya Giriraj. They visited Bhaadva Hill, accepted 'anshan'. Subsequently all the 8.5 crore monks attained liberation.

## **SIDDHVAD**

From Bhaadva Hill, the path for pilgrims begins to descend until it reaches a large banyan tree called Siddhivad. Vad means banyan tree. As mentioned before Infinite souls have attained liberation all over Shatrunjaya Giriraj. However there are certain places where more souls have attained liberation and these places have 'Siddh' as prefix in their names such as Siddhshila, Siddhivad. Numerous souls have attained liberation at Siddhivad.

It is said the Chha Gaun Yatra is considered incomplete if one does not visit Siddhivad Derasar. Siddhivad comes on the border of Adhipur village, named after Shree Adinath Bhagwan.

As Jains, I am sure many of us have undertaken a pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya. Let us pray that someday we can do the Chha Gaun Yatra.

*Sources: Visit to Shatrunjaya by PP Acharyashri G Surishwarji MS | Jai Shatrunjaya by Panyas Gunshilvjay Gani | Shatrunjaya by M Doshi | various websites.*