



Lake Below Narda Peak



Sharda – Narda Peaks



Ganesh Ghati



Kishenganga River



Shardi Village



**Ruins of Sirhasila Castle with Dharamshala
Built By Dogra Kings in the Background**



NEARLY THOUSAND YEAR OLD TEMPLE OF GODDESS SHARDA AT SHARDI { POK } {AUG 2004}
Courtesy : **YOGRAJ RAZDAN {USA } / Brig Rattan Kaul { Copyright Reserved Yograj Razdan}**



**NEARLY THOUSAND YEAR OLD TEMPLE OF GODDESS SHARDA, SHARDA – NARDA PEAKS,
KISHANGANGA RIVER, SIRHASILA CASTLE, { AT SHARDI - POK } { AUG 2003 }
Courtesy : YOGRAJ RAZDAN { USA } / BRIG RATTAN KAUL**

GODDESS SHARDA'S ABODE AT SHARDI IN POK { AUG 2004 }

For the last few years I have been trying all contacts to get latest Photograph of Goddess Sharda's Temple at *Shardi*. Its location in POK and disturbed relations between the two countries made it difficult even though contacts were established at MEA, Embassy, friends level etc. On 25 Aug 04 an angel in the form of Yograj Razdan from USA offered me a set of photographs of the temple and its surroundings, which he had got from his good friend somewhere else! On my request he magnanimously offered to share these with the community.

Ecstatic, I tried to have a glimpse of the temple with a prayer on my lips. My recollection of the temple was the account of Justice S N Katju's visit during summer of 1935, which reads; 'The shrine is located on a hilltop like the shrine of *Jwalaji*. The steps to the top of the hill appeared to be twisted as if an earthquake had battered them". Frankly I was stunned to see the photograph of the sacred shrine. The disappeared stone stair case, partially collapsing quadrangular court wall, collapsed pyramidal roof of the Sanctum Sanctorum and damaged porch pillars. Over a thousand year old temple is somewhat in ruins.

Goddess Sharda had made this place as her abode much before the temple was built, had given *darshan* to *Sage Shandilaya* and then gone inside the *Kund* covered by a 6 inches thick slab, which formed the Sanctum Sanctorum of the temple. Goddess, omnipresent as she is, is there irrespective of the condition of the temple. I fold my hands to our *Sharda Varda Devi*.

Let us not grieve. *Kalishri* {Mahkali} temple had been demolished in 14 Century yet *Mahakali* is there. Over the millennium Awantipore, Narpiristan, Bijbehara, Wangat, Pattan and scores of temple have either been demolished or are in depilated condition but our faith in them remains. Admittedly lucid chronicled accounts of Sharda Temple were given by Jonaraja {15th Century} and Abu Fazal {Akbar's Chronicler-16th Century}. We got details from Sir Auriel Stein, who translated Kalhan's *Rajatarangini*, in 19th Century also. The area of the shrine, almost all the time, was outside the effective jurisdiction of Hindu as well as Muslim Kings of Kashmir. Marauders like Bomba's, Drava's were active in the area. Even King Jai Simha {1128-155 AD} battled his rebellious son Bhoja in this area. With the advent of Islam pilgrimage to the shrine during 16th to 18th Century declined to negligible or nil level. Hostile people, rugged terrain, adverse weather {Snow 25-30 feet, avalanches}, this shrine remained cut off for nearly 6 months in a year from the valley. It was evident that condition of the shrine was slowly deteriorating. To add on, disturbed conditions took its toll. Maharaja Gulab Singh and his successor restarted the pilgrimage, built a *dharmshala* but even their effective control lacked in the area. One will not believe that Bomba's and Drava's of the area came all the way to Srinagar in 1911 and raided the city. Since 1947, temple's proximity to LOC in eyeball confrontation between the two armies, duals and being in a hostile occupied territory added to this neglect.

It is for the first time older, our and GenX will have glimpse of the our principal Goddess's shrine, who gave distinct quality to our community; intellectuality. In South India she is revered as *Goddess Sharda Kashmiri Mandala Vasini*. Let us not forget our Goddess Sharda and we must revere the Goddess, keep her *smriti* in our thoughts and when we talk of our roots we talk of *Goddess Sharda Kashmir Purvasini*. May be our future generations will romp home and bring back the grandeur of the temple to its pre-eminent place. Let us recite this hymn to Goddess Sharda to keep HER always in our thoughts: "*Sharda Varda Devi Mookshidata Saraswati, Sharneye Trambike Gauri, Narayani Namostute. Namastasyey, Namastasyey, Namastasyey Nammo Namahah*"

-Brigadier Rattan Kaul