

Dwarka to boast of ‘Laxmanjhula’ type ‘Sudama Setu’

- Parimal Nathwani

Under able leadership and guidance of Gujarat’s chief minister Smt. Anandiben Patel holy city Dwarka is witnessing transformation. The central government headed by Honourable Prime Minister Narendrabhai Modi has decided to develop Dwarka as a Heritage City. Laxman Jhula type Sudama Setu is taking shape under Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode in cooperation of Reliance Industries Ltd, Tourism Department of Government of Gujarat and Gujarat Pavitra Yatratham Vikas Board. The construction work of the Cable-stayed bridge on the holy river of the Gomti, connecting Shree Dwarkadheesh’s Jagat Mandir and Panchnad Tirth, is likely to be completed before festival of Janmashtami and will be thrown open for the pilgrims. ‘Sudama Setu’ is a symbol of freindship between King of Dwarka Shri Dwarkadeesh Krishna and his poor Brahmin friend Sudama.

Sudama borne in a poor Brahmin family of Porbandar and Shri Krishna borne in royal Yadav family were studying together in ashram of Rishi Sandipani. After completing the study, Sudama returned to Porbandar and Shri Krishna went to Mathura and then settled in Dwarka. And thus became Dwarkadheesh.

After many years poor Sudama decided to meet his friend Shri Krishna only because of his wife’s insistence. However, he was not ready to sacrifice his ‘Ayachak Vrat’- vow not to ask anything from anyone - even from his friend. Moreover, he was quite embarrassed to visit his friend empty handed without taking any gift for him. So, his wife borrowed a handful of ‘tandul’ from a neighbour.

In Dwarka, the gatekeepers at Shri Krishna’s palace were not ready to carry his message to the Lord as they were not ready to believe that the poor Brahmin in wretched condition was Shri Krishna’s friend.

However, when Shri Krishna came to know about arrival of Sudama in Dwarka, he did not even bother to wear shoes and started running in streets of Dwarka to meet his friend. He brought Sudama to his palace. He himself washed Sudama’s feet. While fondly recollecting childhood memories Shri Krishna felt that Sudama is trying to hide something from him. Sudama did not reveal what he was hiding, so Shri Krishna snatched away the bundle. He ate the ‘Tandul’ with love and felt utter satisfaction.

With the first bite Sudama’s debt was repaid. The second bite removed poverty of Sudama. If Rukshmani would not have intevened and stopped Shri Krishna, Sudama might have got Indrasan; says our scriptures.

The hanging bridge, which is on the verge of completion, is named as ‘Sudama Setu’ in fond memories of friendship of Dwarkadheesh Shri Krishna and Porbandar’s poor brahmin Sudama. This hanging bridge will connect Jagat Mandir with Panchnad which is on the other side of the river Gomti. Sudama Setu is being constructed on PPP mode by Reliance Industries Ltd in cooperation with Tourism Department of Government of

Gujarat and Pavitra Yatradham Vikas Board. Panchnad is also known as Panch Kui. This place has a special significance. Despite being surrounded by sea, the five wells have fresh potable water. These five wells are believed to be built during time of the Pandavas.

It is believed that the Pandavas stayed here and the fresh water in the wells are result of their great penance. At present, the pilgrims use boats to cross the Gomti river to reach the shrines on opposite bank. Once the Sudama Setu is built, the pilgrims will be able to visit Panchnad or Panch Kui on foot. There is a temple of Shri Laxmi-Narayan Dev and Pandav Cave on this island. In the temple campus there is a floating stone with 'Ram' engraved on it.

The then minister of state for Pavitra Yatradham Vikas of Gujarat Mr. Jai Narayan Vyas had performed Sheelanyas Vidhi of Sudama Setu in May, 2011. The cable staided bridge with 116 meter length and 2.4 meter width will be completed by festival of Janmashtami in the year 2015. If time taken for soil testing, matrial specification and other technical decisions is deducted, the actual construction period for completion of Sudama Setu will be less then a year. The bridge will be illuminated with LED lightings. It will be an added attraction for the pilgrims and visitors at Dwarka. The government also wants to attract more tourists to Dwarka by development of Panch Kui area. Under able leadership of chief minister Smt. Anandiben Patel the government of Gujarat is also planning to set up Yoga and Meditation centre in Panch Kui area.

Sudama Setu: Specifications and Technical Details

- Total length of the Bridge is 166 Mtrs and width is 2.4 Mtrs.
- **In terms of width, it is one of the largest pedestrian bridges across India (Laxmanjhula - 1.5 Mtrs. & Ramjhula - 1.8 Mtrs at Rishikesh, Omkareshwar Bridge 2.4 Mtrs at Indore)**

- It can carry 25000-30000 persons per hours
- **Estimated cost of construction Rs8 crore. Actual construction period 10 months.**
- Main and Side cables- Specially designed locked cables with inner layers filled with jelly for corrosion resistance from world renowned cable manufacturer Usha Martin
- **LED based lighting system for the deck slab, pylons and surroundings having least electricity consumption and for high illumination**
- Wooden Deck Slab of Sal wood duly seasoned and creosote treated for durability and contemporary look against the normally laid checkered steel plates and PCC pavements.
- **Pylon Height 21 Mtrs. from the Ground Level**
- All structural members hot dip galvanized for maximum protection against severe corrosion
- **Pile Depth up to 17.00 Mtrs from the Ground Levels**
- More than 1300 cubic meter of concrete, 200 tons of structural and reinforced steel have been used.
- **More than 24000 square feet area is being developed on both temple and Panch Kui side for traffic management during peak hours.**

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