

Mythology of Sabarimala Ayyappan

The descendant of Pandiya dynasty discarded by Thirumalai Naicker, Diwan of Raja of Vijayanagar, who was then ruling the Pandya Kingdom, comprising Madurai, Thirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, were living scattered in places like Valliyur, Tenkasi, Shengottah, Achankovil and Sivagiri. At that time Pandyas were ruling in many parts of Travancore and the descendants of Pandya dynasty belonging to Chempazhanattu Kovil, living in Sivagiri were given the right to rule the country of Pandalam, by the King of Travancore eight hundred years ago. King Rajasekara was the direct descendent of this dynasty.

King Rajasekara was very talented, courageous and just in his deeds. People were living happily and prosperously in his regime. However, the king was very unhappy that he had no children and his subjects were also worried that he had no heir to inherit his kingdom. At the request of the queen, both of them used to pray to Lord Siva for blessing them with a child.

Mahishasura, Son of Ramban, undertook a severe penance (Dhavam) towards God. Lord Brahma tried every tactics to stop his Dhavam, but having failed in his attempts, appeared before the Asura and asked him what boon he wanted, from him. Mahishasura asked Lord Brahma to give him a boon by which nobody in the earth would be able to kill him, and Lord Brahma conferred the Boon on him. Mahishasura, armed with this boon, began to commit atrocities and murders on the earth and terrorized people. Fearing his wrath, people ran away to far away places.

The Devas, seeing the atrocities committed by Mahishasura came to the conclusion that only a divine power could kill him and approached Chandikadevi pleading to put an end to Mahishasura who was misusing the boon given by Lord Brahma. Chandikadevi set out on her mission and killed Mahishasura in a duel, on the earth.

Mahishi, daughter of Karamba, brother of Ramban undertook a severe penance towards god in order to take revenge on the Devas, who were responsible for the death of her brother. Lord Brahma appeared and offered to confer on Mahishi any boon except that of immortality. Mahishi asked Lord Brahma to bless her with a boon by which nobody, except the son created out of the union of Hari and Haran, (Vishnu and Siva) would be able to kill her. Lord Brahma gave the boon and Mahishi went to Devaloka and started harassing the Devas.



The Devas incurred the wrath of Durvasa Muni, who cursed them to go gray. Lord Mahavishnu told them that this curse could be removed only by administering Amudham taken from Palazhi. But the Asuras snatched it from them. Lord Mahavishnu in the disguise of a Mohini, went to the Asuras and got back the Amudham, and restored it to the Devas. Lord Siva, when he went to see Lord Mahavishnu who was in guise of a Mohini eloped with him and out of their union, was born a child. Lord Siva adorned the child's neck with a golden chain and ordered that the child be entrusted to the care of his childless disciple, king Rajasekara of Pandalam.

One day King Rajasekara went for hunting in the forest adjoining the banks of river Pamba, along with his men. He started hunting courageously in the dense forest which was a sanctuary for many wild animals. After the hunting was over, King Rajasekara advised his men to take rest and sat there entertaining himself with the sight of the natural greenish beauty and the water-falls of the forest.



At that time, he heard a child crying from somewhere in the forest. Surprised, he went round and reached the banks of River Pamba. There he saw a beautiful and brightly-lit child kicking its legs and crying out, and was in a dilemma whether to take the child to that Palace or leave it there itself.



While the King was engrossed in his thoughts, a Sanyasi (hermit) appeared before him and told the King that he need not be afraid of the child and to take him to the Palace and that the child belonged to Kshatriya dynasty capable of mitigating all sufferings. The Sanyasi further stated that since the Child had a gold chain around his neck, he shall be called Manikanda and when the child completed twelve years, the King would know his divine history. After uttering these words, the Sanyasi disappeared.

The King of Pandalam was very joyous; he took the child to his Palace and briefed the Queen about the incident. The King and Queen, having prayed to Lord Siva for a child, were very happy that they had been blessed with a child. The people also felt happy that a heir to inherit the Kingdom after the King, has been found. However, the Diwan of the Kingdom who was thinking that he would be the next crown after Rajasekara, was worried.

When the child, named Manikanda, began to grow in the Palace, everything began to prosper in the kingdom. He was taught all martial arts and sastras and the Guru was surprised at his brilliance and agility and the extraordinary talents. The Guru came to the conclusion that he was not an ordinary child, but a divine power. After completing his education under the Guru, Manikanda approached the Guru to offer his Guru Dakshina.

When Manikanda went to the Guru for his Ashirwadham, the Guru told him that he

already knew that he was a divine power and he was blessed for having been given an opportunity to have Manikanda as a student. The Guru further told Manikanda that he had one request to make and that was that his only son who was blind and dumb should be given vision and speech. Manikanda called the Guru's son and put his hands on his head and immediately Guru's son had his vision and speech. Manikanda told the Guru not to reveal this to anyone and went back to the Palace.

In the mean while, the Queen gave birth to a male child and the child was named Raja Rajan. King Rajasekara, impressed with the talents of Manikanda, decided to crown him, treating him as his eldest son. He ordered the Diwan to make arrangements for the same. The Diwan hated this and started devising plans to prevent Manikanda from being crowned to the throne and to annihilate him. He tried various methods including poisoning of food, but failed in all these. However, Manikanda's body bore an injury due to these and ordinary physicians could not cure it. Lastly , Lord Siva disguising himself as a physician, treated Manikanda's injury and cured him.

Having failed in all his attempts to kill Manikanda, the Diwan approached the Queen and told her that when she had her own son, it was not correct to crown a person who came from the forest. he further told the Queen since arthasastra itself has justified any misdeed if it was done to extract a good thing, he would suggest that the Queen should pretend as if suffering from severe headache and he would make the physician tell that only tigress's milk should be brought to cure the Queen and since Manikanda only would go to the forest to bring the milk, he would be in danger from the wild animals and even if Manikanda returned without bringing the tiger's milk , the King's love for him would not be as before. The Queen, became a prey to the Diwan's plot and agreed to do what she was told, so that her son could succeed the King to the throne.

The Queen, as told by the Diwan , cried out loudly that she was suffering from severe headache and the King , believing this, called the Diwan to bring in the best physicians to treat her. The Physician, brought by Diwan examined the Queen and told the king that the Queen had been suffering from dangerous disease and it could be cured only by applying Tigress' milk. The King sent several of his men to the forest for bringing this milk, who were able to see the Tigers only but were unable to bring the milk. The King understood that it was an impossible task and wanted his dear Queen to be cured at any cost and offered half of his Kingdom to anybody who brought the milk.

King Rajasekara made arrangements to send a group of his loyal men along with Manikanda, which however was refused by Manikanda on the ground that the tigers might run away seeing the crowd of soldiers. King Rajasekara sent along with Manikanda necessary foodstuffs and coconuts with three-eyes, in remembrance of Lord Siva. The Panchabuthas, sent by Lord Siva, accompanied Manikanda to the Forest. However, on his way seeing atrocities of Mahishi in the Devaloka, he went there and in the battle between them, Mahishi was pushed by Manikanda into the earth, where she fell on the banks of Azhutha River. Manikanda clashed with her there.



At the end of the battle between Mahishi and Manikanda at Azhutha River banks, Manikanda climbed up her chest and danced violently. The impact of his dance was felt in the Earth and Devaloka and the Devas were afraid. Mahishi knowing that the divine power dancing on her body was none other than the son of Hari and Haran, prostrated before Manikanda and died. This dance was witnessed by Lord Siva and Mahavishnu from a place called Kalakatti (It is said that Leela, daughter of Gavalan, a Maharishi, due to her own husband's curse, was born as daughter of Karamban, with a face of Mahishi and freed herself from the curse and obtained Moksha by the grace of Sri Dharma Sastha, which is described in Sabarimala Temple as Maligapurath Amma, by which name she has a temple there.

After killing Mahishi, Manikanda went to the forest for tigress's milk, when Lord Siva appeared before him and told him that though he had done good for the Devas, still there was one main task and that was to give comfort to King Rajasekara who was very concerned about him and also to cure the Queen's ailment. Lord Siva further told him that he could go to the Palace with the tigresses and Lord Indra would help him. As requested by Lord Siva, all female Devas in the disguise of tigresses and male Devas as tigers with Lord Devendra as the tiger on whom Manikanda rode, they started their journey to the Palace.

When Manikanda, with the tigers and tigresses, approached the Palace, the people who ridiculed him when he started the journey to forest whether he wanted a toy tigress, really got panicky seeing the violent bunch of animals and started running helter skelter.

The Sanyasi, who appeared at the forest at the time of King Rajasekara's visit there when he heard a child's cries, again appeared at the palace and told King Rajasekara the identity of Manikanda. Hearing this, the King stood in great surprise and silence. He stood non-plussed as he saw Manikanda riding a tiger and people running away. Seeing the King, Manikanda descended from the tiger's back and told him that since the tigresses were there, he could get the Queen cured with their milk. King Rajasekara fell at his feet and asked to forgive him for whatever happened without his knowledge, and asked him to send back the tigers as the Queen's ailment had been cured the moment Manikanda went to the forest. That day Manikanda reached the age of Twelve.



King Rajasekara told Manikanda that the Diwan was responsible for all these things and hence he should be punished. However, Manikanda told the King that he need not punish the Diwan and all had happened only through the will of God, and he told further that time had come for him to go to Devaloka since the task for which he created himself in the Earth is completed and asked the King what boon he wanted from him and he was ready to give it as he was much pleased by his devotion. Immediately, King Rejasekara told him that they wanted to raise a temple in his memory and suggest a suitable place for the temple. Manikanda aimed an arrow which fell at a place called Sabari, where in Sri Rama's era a Sanyasini called Sabari observed Dhava. Lord Manikanda told the King to build the temple in that place and then he disappeared.

At the advice of Saint Agasthiya, King Rajhasekara laid the foundation stone for building Sabarimala Temple. Bhagwan Manikanda had made it clear that he would grace only those devotees who offer Dharshan after performing a "Vratham" for forty one days keeping themselves isolated from family desires and tastes and leading a life like Brahmacharys, thinking of good things always, and that while coming for his darshan, they shall adorn themselves with three-eyed coconut and foodstuff / Anantha Garland in their heads, as the Bhagwan did when he went to the forest to fetch tiger's milk, and bathed in River Pampa raising slogans of Saranam and climb the [Pathinettam Padi](#).



As graced by the Bhagwan King Rajasekara completed building of the temple with eighteen steps to reach it. When the kind words of the Bhagwan, that River Pamba was a holy river as River Ganga, Sabarimala was a holy place as Kasi. Karmasastha sent Pararusurama to Sabarimala who carved the figure of Lord Ayyappa and installed it on the day of Makarasankranthi. Every year, lakhs and lakhs of people throng to Sabarimala irrespective of caste or creed and adorn themselves with garlands and Irumudis, chant slogans on Lord Ayyappa, bathe in holy river Pampa, climb up the eighteen steps and get the grace of Lord Ayyappa, the Dharmasastha