

Sage Agasthya-some anecdotes.

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Birth of Agasthya

Once upon a time Mithra (Sun) and Varuna (the God of rain) happened to fall in love with the celestial nymph Urvasi. On seeing the pretty dancer, their semen leaked out of them and this was preserved in a pitcher. Out of the pitcher was born two great sages –Agasthya and Vasishta. Together they were called Maithra Varunas. Because he was born out of a pitcher, Agasthya was also called Kumbha Sambhava or Kumbha muni. He was supposed to have existed some 4000 years before the commencement of Kali Yuga and is believed to be still living in Tamil Nadu by devotees.

A folk lore in the Sidha Medicine has a different story to tell. It Says that “Sage Agasthiyar was born about 4573 years prior to the commencement of Kali Yuga at a place in Gujarat. His father Bhargava (Savithru- one of the 14 Adithyas) was well learned while his mother Indumathi was from Punjab on the banks of the Indus River. They were both devotees of the Pasupatha order of the sage Rishabha Muni.”

Education

Sage Agasthya was supposed to be one of the very learned sages of his time. Nothing much is known as to who were his Guru etc. In many Puranas, he is being taught by Sage Hayagreeva, who was one of the incarnations of Vishnu. In fact the great “Lalitha Sahasranama stotram” and Lalitha Trishathi” were taught to him by Sage Hayagreeva at the express orders of Goddess Lalitha Tripura Sundari to Sage Hayagreeva. Sage Drona who was a teacher of Pandavas learned the art of war from his Guru Agni Vesa, who himself is supposed to have learnt it from Sage Agasthya. Sage Agasthya was the one who is credited to have written the first book of grammar of the Tamil language. He also has been credited to have found and popularized the Sidha system of medicine in Tamil Nadu. He is also supposed to be the founder of the “Nadi astrology” of Tamil Nadu. The Keralites claim, that he was the one who was responsible for teaching them the martial art of “kalari Payittu”.

Marriage

One day Sage Agasthya was traveling through the forest and his Pithru devathas (Manes) were found hanging upside down on forest trees. When he asked them, why this fate came to them, they replied, that since Agasthya did not have a son, they were forced to undergo this type of suffering. Agasthya promised them that he would get married. He collected all that is good from every being on earth and created a baby girl. At that time the king of Vidharbha was doing great penance to get a child .Agasthya presented the king with the baby he had created. She was named as Lopa Mudhra and brought up under great luxurious circumstances. When she reached marriageable age, Agasthya requested her hand in marriage

from the king of Vidharbha. Though the king was terribly afraid of the sage, he indicated to him, that he is not willing to give his daughter in marriage to him. But Lopa Mudhra, told her father that she wanted to marry Agasthya. Since he used to walk on forests and mountains, wanting not to trouble his wife, Agasthya used to give her a micro form and carry her in his pitcher,. Due to the wish of Lord Shiva, Agasthya traveled south and settled down there. Due to the very odorous journey that he had to undertake, Lord Shiva gave a boon to Agasthya that his pitcher would be full of water always. At that time, the South India was extremely dry with small streams, which were seasonal. Once when Agasthya had gone to take bath and Lord Ganesa took the form of a crow and overturned Agasthya's pitcher. Lopa Mudhra along with the perennial water from the pitcher turned in to the mighty river Kaveri, which is perennial. She was called Kaveri because, she was spread by a crow(Kaa(crow) Viri(spread))

There is yet another story of Sage Agasthya's marriage from South India. It seems there was a hunter king called Kavera near the Brahma Giri mountain ranges of Coorg. His only aim in life was to do good to his country. He did great penance to propitiate Lord Shiva. At last Shiva came in person. Kavera only wanted the good of his people. Lord Shiva blessed him with a daughter called Kaveri and told him that his wish would be fulfilled through her. Sage Agasthya happened to visit Brahma Giri. Kavera then gave his daughter in marriage to Sage Agasthya. Agasthya and Kaveri lead a very happy life there. But at that time due to the tyrannical rule of an Asura called Surapadma, the entire South India was in the grip of a terrible famine. One day while Sage Agasthya was going to take bath, there was no one to care of Kaveri. So he turned her in to water and placed her in his holy pitcher. Lord Ganesa took the form of a crow and upturned the pitcher. The water which came out of the pitcher became a stream and then a very great perennial river called Kaveri..

Humbling of Vindhya Mountain

The greatest mountain in India always was Maha Meru, which literally touches the sky. The Sun and Moon were supposed to go round that mountain. The Vindhya ranges which are in the middle of India got very jealous of this state of affairs and started growing taller and taller. A stage came when the Sun and the moon were not able to travel to the South. So Indra requested Agasthya to do some thing about it. It was at this time that Lord Shiva decided to marry Goddess Parvathi. People all over the world started traveling to Himalayas to attend Lord Shiva's marriage. Due to this earth started tilting north wards. God Shiva had to stop this so he requested Sage Agasthya (whom he thought as equal to all people on earth) to travel towards the south, so that the great penance he did will balance the earth. Unwillingly Sage Agasthya traveled to south. On his way he was forced to cross the Vindhya mountain., which was extremely tall. Sage Agasthya requested the Vindhya Mountain to become tiny so that he can easily cross it. The Vindhya's acceded to the request of sage Agasthya. Sage Agasthya requested the mountain to be tiny till he came back to North. The mountain agreed to this also. But sage Agasthya settled in south of India and never went back.

Killing of Vatapi.

After his marriage to Lopa Mudhra, she wanted Sage Agasthya to dress himself in finery and be well ornamented. Since he loved her dearly and since he did not have any wealth to buy the dresses and ornaments, Agasthya is supposed to have approached a king called Srutharva. Unfortunately that king did not have excess wealth to share and so in turn Agasthya approached King Bradhnaswara and Rich man Trasadasyu . Both of them expressed their inability to pay the money required by Agasthya. Then Agasthya was directed to approach, a very rich Rakshasa called Ilwala.

Ilwala was living in Manimalpathan along with his brother Vatapi. Once Ilwala had approached a Brahmin sage to bless him with a child. Since the Brahmin sage refused, Ilwala and Vatapi became very angry at Brahmins. Whenever any Brahmin came to their house., Ilwala used to offer them a feast. Vatapi used to take a form of a sheep and this sheep was cut , cooked and served to the Brahmins by Ilwala. Once the Brahmin has eaten his food, Ilwala used to call “Vatapi come out”. Then Vatapi used to come out tearing the stomach of the Brahmin. The same drama was unfolded before Sage Agasthya. However, When “Ilwala called “Vatapi come out”, Agasthya fondling his stomach, told “Digest , Oh Vatapi”. Vatapi was digested. Ilwala gave sufficient money to Agasthya.

Why Agasthya drank the entire sea?

When Vruthrasura was troubling the devas, very much, Devendra waged a war against him and killed him by using deceit. Two of his generals of Vruthrasura , Kalakeyas however escaped. Indra requested Agni and Vayu to chase and destroy them. However Kalakeyas went deep in to the sea and hid there. Every day after sunset they used to come out and used to cause lot of trouble to the great sages, Devas and Men .Devas approached Lord Vishnu for help. Lord Vishnu told them that the only method of catching them was by drying the sea and the only one who was capable of doing it was Agasthya. The devas approached Agasthya for help. Agasthya readily agreed and drank all the waters of the sea and made it dry. Kalakeyas were killed. The drying of ocean, lead to famine .Devas again approached Vishnu. Vishnu told them that a king called Bhageeratha would come and fill up the ocean with the water of the Ganges brought from heaven.

How Agasthya got a golden bangle?

Once Sage Agasthya reached a very huge empty forest. When he walked deep in to the forest he saw some Gandharwas and Apsaras dancing there. Suddenly from their midst a great soul came out. It ate a corpse which was lying there. Then that soul perambulated and saluted Sage Agasthya. He told him as follows, “ I am Swetha the son of the great king Vidarbha belonging to the Treta Yuga. I ruled my country for a long time, without doing any charity came to this forest and did Tapas here. Then I left my body and reached heaven . But in heaven I was feeling the pangs of hunger and when I approached Lord Brahma told me that this is because , while in earth, I have not given anything to any body. He told me to visit

this forest daily and eat a corpse lying there to satisfy my hunger .He also told me that when I complete eating 10000 corpses, I would be able to see you and with your blessings get rid of my perennial hunger in the heaven.”, Thus saying he presented Sage Agasthya with a golden bangle. Agasthya blessed him.

How Sage Agasthya cursed king Nahusha?

Devendra killed Vruthrasura by deceit. Because of this a sin engulfed him and he was forced to hide in the earth. At this time a king called Nahusha completed the performance of one hundred Aswamedha Yagas. Because of this he got the position of Indra. Once he started ruling the devas , Nahusha started misbehaving with every body. He wanted Sachi Devi , the wife of Indra to live with him as his wife. Sachi Devi did not like this at all. She sought the protection of Brahaspathi, the teacher of all devas. Nahusha called Brahaspathi and threatened him.. Then Brahaspathi told Sachi Devi that he was helpless and advised her to find out her husband Indra. Sachi Devi told Nahusha that she was willing to obey his whims but she would like to see her husband who was hiding in earth first. Nahusha agreed to this condition. With the help of Goddess Parvathi , Sachi Devi found out Indra. Indra said that unless he gets rid of his sin, he would not be able to come back but he told her to do a trick to get rid of Nahusha. Sachi Devi went back and told Nahusha, that she will receive Nahusha provided he comes to her house in a palanquin carried by the Saptha rishis(Seven very great sages).. The Saptha rishis included Sage Agasthya. Since Nahusha was the king of devas, his order had to be obeyed by them. Since Agasthya was short and fat he was not able to walk fast and the palanquin tilted at his end. Since Nahusha was in a hurry to reach Sachi Devi's house, Nahusha kept on ordering them, “Sarpa, Sarpa(Fast, fast)”. This infuriated Sage Agasthya and he cursed that Nahusha would indeed become a Sarpa(snake). Nahusha then craved for forgiveness of Agasthya. Sage Agasthya told him that Nahusha would get salvation on seeing his descendents , the Pandavas in the forest.

How Agasthya helped Lord Rama?

During his sojourn in the forests Lord Rama along with Lakshmana and Sita is supposed to have visited the hermitage of Agasthya and stayed there. They also took his advice as where they should live in the forests.

During the war with Ravana in Sri Lanka, Lord Rama fought with Ravana for a long time and was tired and was not able to kill Ravana. At that stage the devas sent sage Agasthya to advice him. Sage Agasthya then taught Lord Rama, a prayer to Lord Sun called Adhithya Hrudaya. Rama chanted this prayer and got the ability to kill Ravana.

How Agasthya cursed the king Indra Dhyumna?

There was a very great king called Indra Dhyumna in the Pandya dynasty. This king was a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Once when Agasthya came to visit him, the king was so drowned in his devotion to Lord Vishnu, that he did not see or show hospitality to Sage Agasthya. Sage Agasthya cursed to him to become an elephant for 1000 years. This elephant was called Gajendra. At this time another sage called Devala cursed a Gandarwa called Huhu to become a crocodile because he disturbed

his penance. Once the Elephant got in to the river in which the crocodile was living. The crocodile caught hold of the feet of the elephant. After a very long time , the elephant called Lord Narayana, who came and killed the crocodile. He also removed the curse on Indra Dhyumna and gave him salvation.

How Agasthya cursed Thataka?

Thataka was the daughter of a Yaksha called Sukethu. She was born to him because of the blessing of Lord Brahma. She had the strength of 1000 elephants. She married another Yaksha called Sunda and a son Mareecha was born to them .In a quarrel with Agasthya ,Sunda was killed. Thataka and Mareecha became very angry and attacked the hermitage of Agasthya. Agasthya cursed them and they became Rakshasas. Later they were killed by Lord Rama and both of them attained salvation.

How Agasthya turned a Vaishnavite temple to that of Shiva?

Agasthya when he arrived from the northern parts of India was a shaivite. He along with his wife reached a place called Kuttralam in Tamil Nadu. There was a temple for Lord Vishnu in Kuttralam. Agasthya being a shaivite was refused entry in to the temple. Agasthya by his miraculous powers converted the statue of Vishnu in side the temple to Shiva Lingam and demonstrated to the people that Shiva and Vishnu were the same one God.