

Why Lord Dharma Sastha descended on earth?


by

--Bhakta Dasan Sri V. NILAKANTA IYER, Trivandrum

Lord Parasurama reclaimed the fair land of Kerala from the sea. For the protection thereof, He installed Devi in Shrines along its West Coast and Sastha on the hills of Western Ghats on the eastern side. The most famous of the Sasthashrines is the one at Sabari Malai. In many places Sastha is being installed as a guardian angel.


Why did Dharma Sastha descend on earth?

The three Trinity forces combined and Dattathreya was born. The three Trinity consort forces combined and was born as daughter to Rishi Galava. She was named Leelavathi. Dattathreya and Leelavathi joined in wed-lock and they lived happily for a good length of time.


As time went on Dattathreya yearned to go back and merge in Trinity. Leelavathi would not let him go. There was an altercation, at the end of which Dattathreya cursed Leelavathi. He said that she would be born a Mahishi (She-buffalow). Leelavathi cursed Dattathreya in return and said 

that he would be born as a Mahishan (He-buffalow). The two curses took effect, Leelavathi becoming a Mahishi and Dhattatreya becoming a Mahishan. The two (Dattathreya and Leelavathi) were reveling together for sometime. Dhattatreya again yearning for his merge with Divinity left Mahishi and had a merge. Mahishi started perpetrating atrocities in this world and in the nether worlds. So, Mahishi is depicted as the incarnation of evil. When evil prevailed in the world and Dharma was at low ebb, the Lord had to descend on earth as Dharma Sastha. One of the purposes of this Avtar was " Mahishi Mardanam" (The destruction of evil).

King Rajasekhara of Pandalam was a Brahmin by name Vijaya in his previous birth. Vijaya had no issues. So he went to sage after sage and prayed to bless him with progeny. At last he went to Sabari of Ramayana fame. Sabari gave him a pot, asked him to go north from her ashram and when he reached a particular spot on a hill side asked him to go west, down the slope of the hill until he came to a rivulet and when reached there to fill the pot with water and pour it on his own head. He did as directed, as he poured the water on his head the pot slipped down from his hand and broke to pieces. As he stood there wondering what to do, a boy appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. Vijaya by intuition knew that the boy who stood before him was none other than the Lord himself. So he told the boy. "You should be my son" the Lord said "be it so". In due course Vijaya was born as king Rajasekharan of Pandalam.

 Lord Dharma Sastha had a curse that he should undergo human sensitude for a period of twelve years. So after obtaining Lord Shiva's permission Dharma Sastha lay on a sand bank in the river Pamba with a bell tied around his neck. When king Rajasekhara of Pandalam; went to that spot for hunting, the king picked up the child and handed him over to his queen on his return from hunt. He was named Manikantan. The child was in Pandalam for a period of 12 years in human sensitude.


Having served at Pandalam for 12 years it was time for the Lord to fulfill the other purpose of HIS Avatar. So, by HIS wish, the queen, HIS foster mother had an illusory head-ache. By HIS wish he made the King's Minister call in a physician. By HIS wish HE made the physician suggest the cure of the queen's head-ache, a medicine should be prepared for which an ingredient should be the milk of a live leopardess. So, on the minister's suggestion King Rajasekhara sent Manikantan to the forest to fetch a live leopard's milk. The boy (Manikanta) prayed to Lord Shiva I and started for the forest. Rajasekhara who was a worshipper of Shiva gave Manikanta a coconut (symbolizing Shiva) for HIS protection, before HE left.

Manikantan reached the forest. All the Bhoodaganams of Shiva appeared before Him as Leopards and Leopardesses. Indira himself appeared before him as huge Tiger. Manikantan rode on the Tiger's back to Pandalam bringing with HIM the entire band of leopardesses. On seeing this return of Manikanta on the Tiger followed by herds of Leopards and Leopardesses, the people of Pandalam were in panic and ran helter-skelter. Then Manikanta revealed his identity and initiated king Rajasekhara into Gnana Yoga and the minister, the queen and the physician into Karma Yoga. HE taught the jealous queen, the ambitious minister and the wicked physician that the only Karma they had to do was to seek refuge in HIM. 

The Guru taught Manikanta and initiated HIM into all Abhyasams was one named Vijaya. Vijaya had a deaf and dumb child. At the request of the Guru's wife, that Manikanta should set right his child; HE sprinkled some water over the child and anointed it. The child started hearing and talking. This incident perhaps shows that the Lord descended on earth to cure mankind of physical maladies also. Leaving Pandalam He went to the forest where he was joined by HIS parivarams such as Dwaparan and Kaduvaran (Vavar and Caduthai) It was the month of panguni, the day on which the Uthram star was ascendant.

Mahishi was perpetrating atrocities in heaven. The Lord went there, caught Mahishi by the herbs and flung her down on earth. Her body fell on the bank of the River Alasa, now called Azutha. The Lord came down and started dancing on the body. It is said that Lord Shiva and Parvathi came on their riding bull and halted at a place called Kalaikatti, from there to witness " Mahishi Mardhanam" destruction of evil in this world.

Having initiated king Rajasekhara into Gnana Yoga, the Lord shot an arrow to show him the spot where to construct the shrine, to install HIM. The king could follow the course of the arrow with his mental eyes. The arrow flew past Sabari Peedam and struck against a peepal tree.

Sabari was a huntress who reached dizzy heights in the spiritual plane by Guru Bakthi and service of Guru along. Poet Valmiki has assigned to her a very exalted position in the Ramayana. Lord Dharma Sastha is said to have raised her to the state of Nirvana. 

So, the Lord descended on earth to destroy evil, to undergo human servitude for 12 years, teach Gnana Yoga to people like king Rajasekhara, to fulfill his promise to the Brahmin Vijaya to be his son, to teach erring mankind, that the only Dharma they had to do was to seek refuge in HIM and to raise Sabari to the state of Nirvana.

At Sabarimalai Lord Dharmasastha is seated on Padmasana (a thousand petalled Lotus) HE is sitting on his feet, the legs and body being tethered together by a Yoga pattai. The left arm resting on the left knee has the hand pointing down to the left foot. The right arm resting on the right knee has the hand raised up with the tips of the thumb and the pointing finger joined together, showing thereby that the Lord merges the Jeevathma in the Paramathma. [The thumb is the paramathma and the pointing finger is the Jeevathma].

SWAMIYE SARANAM AYYAPPA