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Sri Bhakta Kannappa



Kannappa Nayanar or Kannappan was one of the 63 Nayanmars or holy Saivite saints, the staunch devotees of Lord Shiva. The Periyapuram compiled by Sekkizhar and also the Tiruththondar Thogai by the poet-saint Sundarar enlists the 63 Nayanars.

Birth and Life

Kannappa Nayanar was born in a tribal family in Uduppoo (modern Vutukuru) near Rajampet by the temple town of Sri Kalahasti, in present day Andhra Pradesh. He was named Thinnan or Dheeran or Boya Tinnadu by his parents. He hunted in the forest around Sri Kalahasti and the hills - Sripuram and Mummidi-cholapuram.

Thinnan's devotion

Thinnan was a staunch devotee of the Vayu linga of SriKalahasti which he found in the forest while hunting. Being an illiterate and of a low-caste birth, he did not know how to properly worship Lord Shiva. It is said that he poured water from his mouth on the Shiva lingam which he brought from the nearby river Swarnamukhi. He also offered the Lord whatever animal he hunted, including swine flesh. But the Lord accepted his offering since Thinnan was pure at heart and his devotion was true.

One day, Lord Shiva tested the unshakable devotion of Thinnan. With his divine power, He created a tremor and the roof-tops of the temple began to fall. All the sages ran away from the scene except for Thinnan who covered the linga with his body to prevent it from any damage. Hence he was named thereafter as Dheeran.

Kannappa



In another incident, one day Thinnan or Dheeran noticed that one of the eyes of the Shiva linga was oozing blood and tears. Sensing that the Lord's eye had been injured, Dheeran proceeded to pluck his one eye out with one of his arrows and placed it in the spot of the bleeding eye of the Shiva linga. This stopped the bleeding in that eye of the linga. But to complicate matters further, he noticed that the other eye of the linga has also started oozing blood. So Thinnan thought that if he were to pluck his other eye too, he would become blind to exactly know the spot where he has to place his own second eye over the bleeding second eye of the lingam. So he placed his great toe on the linga to mark the spot of the bleeding second eye and

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proceeded to pluck out his other and only eye. Moved by his extreme devotion, Lord Shiva appeared before Thinnan and restored both his eyes. He made Thinnan as one of the Nayanmars and henceforth he would be called as Kannappan or Kannappa Nayanar.

Kannabeswara

On the southern hill of the Kalahasti Temple, there is the shrine of Kannabeswara in his memory (Kannappa = Thinnan, eswara = Shiva which means "Kannappa, the devotee of Shiva").

Reincarnation of Arjun

Some Saivite traditions believe that Kannappa was the reincarnation of the Pandava - Arjuna. Arjuna worshipped Siva for seeking the Pasupatha Astra (a divine weapon) and failed to recognize Shiva when He appeared before Arjuna in the form of a hunter. Thus, due to this reason, Arjuna had to be born as Thinnan/ Kannappa, the hunter and adore the Lord before attaining final liberation.

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