

Mangalore Saravu Sarabheswar Maha Ganapathi temple

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Maha Ganapathi Sarabheswar, Entrance to the temple
and Lord Shiva

Temple

Karnataka, a southern state in India has many historical temples. Especially the temples in Mangalore have interesting legends behind them. One amongst them is Saravu Sarabeswar Maha Ganapathi temple. As per a story in Skanda Purana, once Lord Muruga requested his brother Vinayaga to manifest in the area where rivers Palguni and Netravathi merged to fulfill the wishes and protect his devotees in and around the place. Respecting his brother's request, some years later Lord Vinayaga manifested with his wife Siddalakshmi in that place. Few

legends connected with the temple of Maha Ganapathi and Lord Shiva was interesting to read.

Story of Sarabeswarar temple

Long ago, a pious, God fearing and a strong King named Veerabahu ruled a place called Thulu (In Karnataka region). He was fond of hunting in the forests and one day as he was returning back after hunting, he stopped in a spot where rivers Palguni and Nethravali met. There were two temples, one for Lord Shiva and other for Lord Vishnu. He rested near the river, worshipped the deities in those temples after taking bath in the river, and returned back. To the east of Shiva temple was a dense forest. On way through the forest, he noticed an amazing scene. In the midst of the forests were several hermits for the saints and away over a distance were a cow and a tiger. The tiger was moving closer to the cow. In a moment of anxiety and fear that the tiger would kill the cow, the King shot an arrow on the tiger. Alas, the arrow missed the tiger, and hit the Cow, which was actually moving along with the tiger. The King felt sorry for the unintentional mistake and went to saint Bharatwaja staying in the near by hermit and narrated the incident seeking his advice over the unintentional sin committed by him.

Saint Bharadhwaja consoled him saying 'O king, don't worry, now that an unintentional sin has been committed, you have to find recourse. Lord Parasurama sanctified this place due to which even habitual enemies like a Cow and a Tiger is able to stand side by side! No doubt you killed the cow in the process of saving it, but it has resulted in gohatya (Sin for killing a holy cow). Worry not. In order to absolve the sin I suggest an appropriate remedy. It is for you to decide. You have to construct a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva at the same spot where gohatya was

committed and Pujas and worship of Shiva be performed by you daily. This will expiate your sin in stages'.

Without a moment of hesitation, the King agreed to the suggestion of the saint to construct a temple. Saint further advised him 'O king! Before you begin the construction of the temple, install a Shiva Linga on the same spot and commence worship there. Subsequently you have to construct a tank to the north of the temple and to its south, install a stone idol of a cow. By the power of my tapas I will ensure that the water of the Netravali River flows through the mouth of the cow, which will continue to fill the tank without allowing it to dry. Name the place Sarabeshwara. In order to earn the grace of Shiva, you should feed one lakh Brahmins and in course of time the deity Sarabeshwara will become famous like Kashi Vishwanath. One day Ganapathy will also manifest from the southern side of the temple who when consecrated in a temple, will become popular as 'Sri Saravu Mahaganapathy.' With such a sermon received from Rishi Bharadwaj, Veerabahu became very happy, and commenced the construction of the Shiva temple. Bharadwaj established a Siva ling in the spot where his arrow fell and as promised, ensured that the river flew through the mouth of Cow idol.

Birth of Maha Ganapathi temple

Veerabahu did not have an heir to take over the kingdom after his death. So along with his wife he continued to visit the temple, performed pujas, and prayed with great devotion. During this period Chandrasekhar Jain, the king of Hoysala, harbored hatred towards Vishnuvardhan another King in the nearby state, reason being Vishnuvardhan had deserted the Jain faith and converted himself a devotee of Lord Vishnu. In the battle that ensued, Chandrasekhar Jain was killed and his son, Vera Bangaraja, approached king Veerabahu and

sought his refuge. At the instance of saint Bharadwaj, Vera Bangaraja adopted him as his son, handed over his kingdom to him, and thereafter went to live in a forest (Vanvas) with his wife.

With Vera Bangaraja in saddle, Lord Ganapathy thought that was appropriate time to manifest and therefore requested his Mother Mangala Devi to appear in the dream of king Vera Bangaraja and instruct him to construct a temple for her near Goraknath Ashram so that he could also manifest in the opposite side of her temple along with Siddhilakshmi gazing at her all through the time. Acceding to the request of Lord Ganapathy, Mangala Devi appeared in a dream of king Bangaraja, and told him to search and dig out her idol buried to the west of Goraknath Ashram and construct a temple at the same spot as she desires to grant prosperity to the people living in his kingdom. Though King Bangaraja was bit confused over the dream, he consulted his colloques and decided to act as advised. He along with his ministers and subjects visited the spot indicated by Mangala Devi, searched and found the buried idol installed the idol in a temple constructed on the same spot and named it as Mangala Devi temple. Subsequently regular daily pujas and other rituals took place both in Sharabeshwara and Mangala Devi temples.

After the death of Vera Bangaraja, his son, Chandrasekhar Bangaraja, took over the reins. During his regime there lived a poor Brahmin by name, Keshava who was a scholar, man of wisdom, and great devotee of Lord Vinayaga. He practiced tantric rituals for earning, since he was well versed in the subject and performed the duty of a priest in Ganapathi temple on the bank of Netravathi River. So famous was Keshava that in the homa performed, Lord Vinayaga used to actually

appear in person to touch the Prasad with his trunk as a symbol of acceptance.

One day, sitting alone, the King wondered how to increase the revenue of his state to extend more welfare measures to the people. By then he received a message that a fleet of seven ships laden with golden ores and valuable jewels were sailing to a far-off land through the area ruled by him. The king thought that if those valuables could be confiscated, it will help develop the state to extend more welfare measures to the people. On the advice of his ministers, he utilized the services of priest Keshava to achieve the fete. Accordingly Keshava prayed Lord Vinayaga and invoked mantras to cause a violent storm in the sea thereby compelling all the ships to toss ashore. As it happened, the King after confiscating all the valuables from the ship let the crew proceed on their voyage. What a surprise! The storm stopped and turbulence in the sea calmed down!! Thereafter Keshava became more popular.

Lord Vinayaga, who was waiting for such an opportunity to occur, appeared in the dream of both the King and Priest Keshava to tell them that would shortly manifest along with Siddhilakshmi on the southern wall of Sharabeshwara temple, and a temple be constructed opposite to the Mangalambika's temple and he worshipped there. Leaving the instruction Lord Ganapathy disappeared from the scene. As expected, one fine morning, to the excitement of everyone, Lord Ganapathy along with Siddhilakshmi appeared on the southern wall of Sharavu Shiva temple. Accordingly a temple came up for him and with passage of time it became very famous.

Why did Vinayaga manifest with Siddalakshmi?

According to some belief as stated in puranas, Lord Vinayaga assumed different forms in various yugas (Periods). The present being Kali Yuga

the craze for wealth dominated the minds of people instead of spiritual solace, and therefore Lord Ganapathy manifested himself with Siddhilakshmi to bestow wealth and prosperity to the devotees.

Glory of Lord Saravu Ganapathi

Tippu Sultan heard about the prosperity of Thulu under the rule of Bangaraja. He decided to invade Thulu with a view to looting the wealth there and declared a war. Followed by a huge army, he reached the outskirts of Thulu and camped there. On hearing the news of Tippu's invasion, the agonized citizens rushed to the priest seeking his help. The priest requested them to stay calm and pray to Lord Ganapathy. Along with them he too started praying **Sharavu Ganapathy** seeking protection from the impending peril. That night, haunted by a nightmare in dream in which an elephant trampled, lifted him with its trunk, and threw him to the ground several times, Tippu Sultan could not get sleep. The same dream continued to come throughout the night and disturbed his sleep. He called one of the ministers belonging to the Hindu sect and sought his advice. The Minister went to the temple and consulted the priest who told him that Lord Ganapathy was annoyed over the evil intention of Tippu and that is why he has been haunted in the night. When the minister returned back and apprised Tippu of this, for inexplicable reasons, Tippu's mind suddenly changed to call off the war without consulting anyone. Next day he met the King and promised to grant donation to Saravu Maha Ganapathi temple and returned back to his country.

End note: The contents of this article are based on the Pundits (Pujaries) and other devotees version. Photos gathered from different sources. In case some one gets further information I shall be glad and thankful if they mail me the content in_nrj1945@gmail.com to enable updating the article in future.

