



A black and white photograph of an elderly man, likely a Hindu sage, wearing a shawl and holding a magnifying glass over his face, looking down at a book or document.

city. Sri Maha Periyava was accommodated in a bhajan mandapa where He gave a discourse on Sanatana Dharma in Telugu to the large gathering of devotees. At the end of the lecture, He gave the devotees His blessings and prasadam and continued on His yatra. After they passed a

distance of seven or eight miles, a fertile Zamin village was sighted. All the people in the village with their family and children came to the boundary of the village and welcomed Maha Periyava with purna kumbham. Thereafter, the Zamindar of the village prayed to Sri Maha

Periyava with humility: "Our village should become holy, sanctified by the holy feet of Maha Swamigal. You should stay here for a few days. There is a large choultry here with facilities for your stay and puja punaskarya. A clean puskarani is also nearby." The entire village

prostrated to Maha Periyava and prayed. Acharyal was moved by their Atmarta bhakti. He gave them His anugraha and announced to their immense happiness that He would stay with them for twenty one days. The village wore a festive look on the next morning. Arrangements for the

ChandraMouleeswara puja were done, Acharyal having left for His bath in the nearby pond. The aged SriMatham karyasta asked the youth who were doing the arrangements with anxiety, "You people have arranged for a large samruti of flowers, but then there are no vilva patra (bael

leaves) among them! How can Maha Periyava do the Sahasra namarchana without them?" The youth stood, wringing their hands. The karyasta said, "Go tell the village people about the requirement of three-leaved vilva clusters for Sri Maha Periyava's ChandraMouleeswara puja and ask

them to bring large numbers of them in bamboo baskets. Get someone who understands Telugu and talk to them. If that does not convey it properly show them the nirmalya leaves we have the remains of the earlier pujas done by Maha Periyava, and ask them to bring the leaf clusters!"



The boys did as they were told but the people told them that they had never seen a tree that has clusters of three leaves on a single stalk. The village Vedic pundits also confirmed that there were no vilva trees in their village. Sri Maha Periyava arrived, finishing His bath.



The puja articles were ready in the centre of the hall. The first question Maha Periyava asked on having a glance at them was, "Endappa! Have you arranged for the vilvam for archana?"

The karyasta said in a soft voice, "The village people and the Vedic pundits here say that there

are no vilva trees in this place."

It was 10:30 in the morning. Periyava walked hurriedly towards the backyard of the choultry. He entered the cattle shed of the cows. He climbed and sat on a rock of black stone found there, and lapsed into meditation. The SriMatham notables were

worried that the bhiksha vandanam for ChandraMouleeswara and Periyava might stop for want of vilva leaves. Tears started welling up in the eyes of the karyasta. The news reached the Zamindar who sent people to search for the vilva trees in their place, but was disappointed. The

time was 11:30 at noon. People had gathered around the cattle shed, waiting silently with anxiety. The sight of Maha Swamigal in meditation on the rock reminded them of saakshat Sri Parameshwara sitting in the Kailash mountain. Suddenly they saw a SriMatham devotee coming from

the entrance, carrying on his head a large basket. His face was full of happiness. He kept the basket down in the hall and what a wonder, the basket was full of vilva leaves! Everyone was happy at the sight and Maha Periyava whose meditation was disturbed descended from the rock.





His first question to the karyasta was "The vilvam for the ChandraMouleeswara puja has arrived now (right)? Besh, let us get inside." Maha Periyava took a few leaves in His hand from the basket. They sparkled with the lushness of green. Acharyal asked His karyasta, "Who plucked

these leaves with such care that not a single cluster of them is defective? People said that there were no vilva trees in this region. Did you ask where these leaves were plucked?"

The karyasta looked at the man who brought the vilva basket. That youth said, "Periyava, I casually

went to the entrance and noticed that this basket was kept on the eastern side under the pandakkai. When I checked, it was full of vilva leaves, Periyava."

"That is alright, but did you ask who brought it and placed there?"

"I asked Periyava, but nobody among those assembled

there had any idea."

"Then who could have placed it there?" asked Acharyal laughingly. No one had anything to reply. As He moved towards the puja spot, Acharyal smilingly turned and said, "Perhaps our ChandraMouleeswara Himself has brought the leaves?" Maha

Periyava started the



puja. His archana to Sri ChandraMouleeswara with the lush green vilva leaves made everyone rapturous. The prasadam was distributed after the puja. In the evening, Acharyal held an upanyasa on Srimad Ramayanam in Telugu. The entire village listened to it with happiness. On the

morning of the next day, a bhajan troupe of that village sang and danced with ecstasy at the entrance of the choultry. The entire village wore the look of an occasion of wedding. Acharyal went to the pond with some of the people of the Matham. Like the previous day, there was a

basketful of vilva leaves kept in the usual spot! The youth carried the basket happily and reported to the SriKaryam (manager), "I found this basket at the same spot today also, don't know who kept it there and when was it placed." SriKaryam was surprised and confused as to who

was bringing the vilva leaves with such secrecy. Acharyal returned. When He noticed the vilva leaves kept ready for puja in the hall, He turned His face meaningfully at SriKaryam. The man prostrated to Acharyal and said, "Yes, Periyava. Another vilva basket at the same place

today also. Nobody knows who kept it there."Maha Periyava completed the puja. When He finished His bhiksha and was sitting in solitude, He called SriKaryam and told him, "You should get up early tomorrow morning and do one thing. Take someone with you, and check without anyone

seeing you. Find out who is leaving the vilva basket. And bring that person to me. You need not ask that person anything. You understand?" Periyava smiled. SriKaryam gave an affirmative nod, prostrated to the sage and moved away. Next morning, SriKaryam and his two assistants

stood hiding behind the large banyan tree at the entrance and were keenly looking at the pandal. At 8:30, a boy emerged from the mango groves on the eastern side. He had a large, dry basket on his head. He sported a tuft of hair and wore a dirty dhoti tucked under his thighs as

moola kaccha. He looked here and there, went near the pandal staff, and kept his basket down and started turning back. SriKaryam ran and stood before him. The boy's hands and legs started shivering as he looked at the man before him. He immediately prostrated to the man who asked

him, "Is it you who kept this vilva basket here for the last two days?"

The boy nodded yes to this question. SriKaryam told the boy, "Alright. Go and have a bath, tie your tuft properly, wear what you usually wear on your forehead and come here in the afternoon. I shall take to

the Periya Saami. You can get his blessing. You come looking bright, without this dirty dhoti, understand?" The boy nodded yes and ran away. It was 3:00 in the afternoon. As ordered, the boy came. SriKaryam pointed him who was standing hesitatingly in the corner of the courtyard

wall, to Periyava and said something. Maha Periyava called the boy near him. The boy came near him, prostrated and stood with folded hands. Achayal had a laugh, looking at the boy's appearance, who looked bright with vibhuti streaks on his forehead and all over the body, wearing

a white dhoti as moola kaccha, and a tuft of neatly tied hair. Periyava asked him to sit down in the courtyard, but he did not sit. "What is your name?" Periyava asked him in Telugu.

"Purandara Kesavalu (nga)." The boy spoke his name slowly and clearly. Periyava raised his brows

as he asked him, "You talk in Tamil!"

"My story, you should listen to it, Saami" His eyes were full of tears.

"Besha. Tell me, tell me" Periyava urged him. Purandara Kesavalu started talking. "My native place is Usilampatti (nga), near Madurai. Within two years of my birth, my

mother passed away in an illness. From that time, only my father raised me. When I was six years old, he came to this region with me to earn a living. He got the job of tending the cattle in the Zamin of this village. I did not read or go to school. But I have learned a lot from

my father. My father was very fond of music. He would sing the songs of Purandaradasaru and Tiruvaiyaru Thiyagarasa Saami very well. He has also taught me to sing and I too can sing those songs. Because of his liking for music he named me Purandara Kesavalu. He is no more now.

Two years since he attained his moksham (liberation). I am tending the Zamin cattle now. They feed me in the Zamin and pay me. I am now 12 years old, Saami."

Periyava was moved at his words and asked him with surprise. "Alright. Since there is no vilva tree in the surroundings

where did you get this much of vilva?"

Purandara Kesavalu replied humbly. "There is a large growth of grass and shrubs on the foothills at three miles from here, Saami. From the days of my father, we used to go there and let the cattle browse. There are three large vilva trees

there! My father would bring me the leaves of those trees and tell me, 'Elay Purandara, this leaf is called vilvam. It is ambuttu (such a) vishesham-daa (speciality), to perform puja to Sivaperuman with this leaf! Have a look.' That was in my mind Saami. When I saw the people of

this Matham show a sample of this leaf on the day before yesterday and ask for a lots of them, I understood immediately, ran to the place and brought them in a basket. Since I feared that if you came to know that the leaves were brought by a cowherd boy, you might not accept them

for puja, I kept the basket here without anyone knowing it. This is the satyam Saami!" Moved further at the words, Acharyal kept silent for some time. Then he said with affection, "Purandara Kesavalu, what do you want? Tell me what your wish is. I shall ask it to be fulfilled

from the Matham."

At the Sage's words, Purandara Kesavalu exclaimed, "Siva, Siva!" patted his cheeks and said, "Saami, my father used to tell me, 'Purandara, we should not desire for anything in this world. But we should wish for only one thing.' I have two wishes now. If you

permit me, I shall speak one of my wishes now. The other one I shall ask you on the day you leave this place, Saami." The boy's eyes filled as he prostrated and rose. Periyava went melting. He urged the boy, "Come on, tell me what your wish is." The boy said hesitatingly, "It is

nothing else, Saami. My father has taught me a number of songs of Purandaradasa Saami and Thiyagarasa Saami. I should sing them before you Saami, till you stay here! You should listen to them and grace me!" Acharyal was immensely happy at the boy's wish.

"Purandara Kesavalu,

definitely, you sing here. I shall listen to your songs. I shall ask everyone to listen to them. You come every day in the afternoon at three o' clock. Sit down and sing before me. Let ChandraMouleeswara Swami's grace be with you." Periyava blessed him. Purandara Kesavalu went

happy. Acharyal persisted. "This is alright Purandara Kesavalu. Say what your other wish is, let's hear it."

"When you leave this place, I shall pray to you with that wish, Saami", he replied with respect. Swamigal asked SriKaryam to give him prasadam and a lovely tulasi garland.

Purandara Kesavalu was very happy to wear it. He prostrated to the Sage and took leave. From the afternoon of the next day he started to come and sit down on the courtyard floor and sing the keertanas of Sri Purandaradasa and Sri Thiyagaraja known to him. Maha Periyava listened

to his singing, sitting in the hall. His voice was sweet. Periyava corrected the pronunciation mistakes the boy made in singing.

It was the twenty first day of their stay. After completing Sri ChandraMouleeswara puja and taking His bhiksha, Maha Periyava started from that village

Coming out of the choultry, He gave a lecture of blessing to the people who had gathered to bid Him farewell. Everyone was in tears listening to his parting words. Then He moved away with His entourage, but Acharyal suddenly remembered something and looked back at the choultry.

Purandara Kesavalu was standing sobbing under the pandal there, his hands around a staff. Maha Periyava asked the boy to be brought to him. He came running, prostrated on the ground and got up. The Parabrahmam looked at him with affection, smiled and said, "Purandara Kesavalu!

For the bhakti, shraddha, jnana you have, you should rest in prosperity. You spoke about your other wish on that day! What is that, my boy?"

Purandara Kesavalu said, "When I was tending the cows with my father, he used to tell me, Saami 'What should we pray to God, you know? We

should pray, 'God, I don't want maru piravi (another birth); I should go to moksham (liberation); you should give me your grace (for that). For that we should live with satya and dharma. If you meet any Mahan in any of the times, you pray to them to get you moksham.' You should

get me that moksham, Saami."

That Parabrahmam was surprised to listen to such words from the mouth of a twelve year old boy. Then He said with a laugh as He blessed him, "Don't worry. At the apt time, Bhagavan will you give you the blessing for the attainment of that moksha."

Acharyal called the Zamindar of the village and told him, "Inform SriMatham immediately about anything that concerns this Purandara Kesavalu", and left the village. Everyone came up to the boundary of the village to bid farewell to Sri Maha Periyava. It was a day several years

later, and the time was around two in the afternoon. Acharyal, who was conversing with devotees in Sri Kanchi Matham, suddenly rose and came out of the Matham and started walking briskly. People followed Him. He halted at the Kamakshi Amman Pushkarani and took bath. Then He

started chanting something with closed eyes, standing in the waters of the pond. An hour later, He did another bath and japam. In this way, He repeated the sequence for seven or eight times, until it was six in the evening. Before He climbed the steps of the bathing ghat and sat

on a step, a person from the Matham came running and stood before Him. Acharyal looked at him inquisitively. He said, "A telegram from Kurnool. Says that Purandara Kesavalu is seriously ill. Don't know who this person is, Periyava." Periyava told the people around him, "That

Purandara Kesavalu is no more now! He had his kalagati just a little while before. When I stayed in their village he asked me on the last day to get him moksha. I told him that he would get it by the grace of ChandraMouleeswara Swami. Suddenly he took ill with some terminal fever

and was suffering now, anxious about his moksha. In the order of things, he should take another six births to attain moksha. I did the japam and prayed for him that somehow he (would skip the remaining births and would attain moksha. Purandara Kesavalu is a good Atma!" With these

words, Acharyal started walking briskly back towards SriMatham. The people of the Matham stood transfixed with amazement on the steps of the pond!

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