

# THE LEGEND OF CHANDESUVARA NAYANAR: † THE YOUNG BRAHMAN COWHERD.

[† This is very ancient and popular legend is referred to in the *Thiruvacakam*, XV. 25-28.]

“The boy, from guilt and evil free, cut off the feet of him  
Who rashly overthrew the work in Siva’s honour done;  
In caste a Brahman he, his father too? Through Isan’s grace,  
While gods adored, his crime was utterly consumed. ...”

In a town in the Sora country, called *Seynalur* a Brahman boy was born, whose name was Visara-sarumar, who, from his earliest days instinctively understood the whole Saiva creed; so that when the sages came to instruct him he met them with the recitation of the essential doctrines of the system, which he had grasped by a divine intuition. It may be permitted to repeat the articles of his creed, as these are summed up in the legend: ‘All souls are from everlasting fast bound in the chains of impurity. To destroy that impurity, and to give to these souls infinite felicity and eternal release, He who is eternal is revealed. He performs the five Acts of Creation, preservation, destruction, “envelopment,” and gracious deliverance. He is the one Lord (Pathi), Who possesses the eight attributes of absolute independence, purity of form, spontaneous understanding, absolute knowledge, natural freedom from all bonds, infinite grace, endless might, boundless blessedness; and whose name is Siva, the Great Lord. He performs his gracious acts by putting forth the energy (*Satti*), Who, as a person, is one with Him, and is therefore the divine Mother of all, as He is the divine Father and must, with Him, be loved and worshipped. Nor can we say “we will do this in some future birth,” for we are born here as human beings for this and no other purpose; and the human form in the infinite series of transmigrations is hard to attain unto. Nor should we defer till tomorrow our dedication of ourselves, since we know not the day of our death. Therefore must we avail ourselves of Siva’s gift of grace, studying the sacred Agamas and other works, without doubting, or commingling of perverse interpretation. This is the way of life!’

One day, together with his school companions, he went out to the bank of the river where the village cows were grazing in charge of a man of the herdsman caste. This rustic, having no sense of right and wrong, beat one of the cows with a stick; but Visara-sarumar was vehemently stirred by this outrage, and rushing up to him in great wrath, restrained him from striking the sacred animal. ‘Know you not,’ said he, ‘that cows have come down from the world of Siva to this earth? In their members the gods, the sages and the sacred purifying stream dwell. The five products of these sacred creatures are the sacred unguents of Siva. And the ashes which are the adornment of the God and his devotees is made from their refuse.’ Dwelling upon this idea he conceived a desire to devote himself entirely to the task of herding and caring for the troop of sacred cows; and accordingly sent away the rustic, who reverentially departed.

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And now our hero is the self-dedicated Brahman herdsman. He easily obtains permission of all the Brahmans of the town to take charge of their kine; and daily along the bank of the beautiful river Manni he leads forth his troop into the grassy glades and green pastures allowing them with refreshing water. When the fierce heat of the sun oppresses, he leads into the shady groves, and guards them well, meanwhile gathering the firewood necessary for his household worship; and then at eventide, leaving each cow at its owner's door, he goes to his home.

While things went on in this manner the cows increased daily in beauty, waxed fat, were joyous, and by day and night poured forth abundant streams of milk for their owners. The Brahmans found that they had more milk than formerly for their offerings, and were glad. The cows, tended with such unvarying solicitude, were brisk and cheerful, and though separated from their calves that remained tied up in the houses, grieved not a whit, but with joy awaited the coming of their herdsman, following him gladly, crowding around him like tender mothers, and lowing joyfully at the sound of his voice. The young Brahman, seeing the exuberance of their milk, reflected that this was a fitting unction for the head of the God; and conceiving a great desire so to employ it, constructed a lingam of earth on a little mound beneath the sacred Atti tree on the bank of the river, and built around it a miniature temple with tower and walls. He then plucked suitable flowers, and with them adorning the image, procured some new vessels of clay, and took from each of the cows a little milk, with which he performed the unction prescribed for the divine emblem (the Lingam\_, and Sivan the Supreme looked down and received with pleasure the boy-shepherd's guileless worship. All essentials of the sacred service he supplied by the force of his imagination. Though this was done daily, the supply of milk in the Brahman's dairy was no whit diminished.

For a long time this continued, until some malicious person saw what was going on and told it to the Brahmans in the village, who convened an assembly before which they summoned his father, and told him that his son Visara-sarumar was wasting the milk of the Brahmans' sacred cows by pouring it idly on the earth in sport. The father feared greatly when he heard the accusation, but protected his entire ignorance of the waste and desecration, and asking pardon, engaged to put a stop to his son's eccentric practices. Accordingly the next day he went forth to watch the boy's proceedings, and hid himself in a thicket on the bank of the river. He soon saw his little son ceremoniously bathe in the river, and then proceed to his miniature temple, gathering sacred flowers and leaves, arranging everything in order for the minutiae of Siva worship, and then pouring a stream of anointing milk over the earthen *lingam*. Thus convinced of the truth of the accusation he was greatly incensed, and rushing forth from his concealment inflicted severe blows upon the boy, and used many reproachful words. But the young devotee's mind was so absorbed in the worship, so full of the rapture of mystic devotion, that he neither perceived his father's presence, nor heard his words, nor felt his blows. Still more incensed by the boy's insensibility, the infatuated father raised his foot, broke the vessels of consecrated milk, and destroyed the whole apparatus of worship. This was too much for the young enthusiast to bear; the god of his adoration was insulted, and the sacred worship defiled. He regarded not the fact that it was his father, a Brahman and a *guru* that was the offender; but only saw the heinous sin and insult to Siva. So with the staff in his hands he aimed a blow at the offender's feet, as if to cut them off; and, behold, the shepherd's staff became in his hands

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the *Sacred Axe* of Siva, and the father fell maimed and dying to the ground. The boy then went on with his worship as if nothing had occurred, but the Lord Siva with Uma the goddess riding on the sacred White Bull immediately appeared hovering in the air. The young devotee prostrated himself before the holy vision in an ecstasy of joy; when the Supreme One took him up in his divine arms, saying, 'For my sake thou hast smitten down the father that begat thee. Henceforth I alone am thy father, and embracing him stroked his body with his sacred hand, and kissed him on the brow. The form of the child thus touched by the divine hand shone forth with ineffable lustre, and the God further addressed him thus: 'Thou shalt become the chief among my servants, and to thee shall be given all the offerings of food and flowers that my worshippers present. His name then became Sandecubarar ('the impetuous Lord') The God finally took the mystic Cassia wreath from his own head, and with it crowned the youthful saint. And so he ascended to heaven with Siva, and was exalted to that divine rank. The father, too, who had been guilty of such impiety to the God, and had been punished by the hand of his own son, was forgiven and restored, and with the whole family passed into Siva's abode of bliss.

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