

Kusmanda and Narmadeswar

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Lord Shiva appeared to be deep in thought, his eyebrows creased. His daughter Narmada with her gentle flow, at times swift and fast, had lovingly chanted her father's name as she flowed over yet another large rock - now a manifestation of Lord Shiva, a beautiful bana lingam, a rare piece that seemed to have a golden hue at times. Shiva wondered where this gift of his daughter Narmada to his earth bound devotees would be installed.

Swami Samvidananda Saraswati from the Kailash Math Bhakti Dham of Nashik had come all the way south to Vaidyagrama to find some solace for his physical frame that needed healing. He had instituted the weekly



practice of Rudrabhishekam to the Bana lingam that was already there in the Brahma Kamalam.

He visited several months ago when he announced that Vaidyagrama should be ready to welcome a majestic Bana Lingam that would be 4 feet plus. Everyone was overjoyed and excited by the news. Finally the day dawned, months later when we received a phone call to say that Lord Shiva, the base and even his vahana Nandi were ready to commence their journey.

The physical composition of Narmadeshwar is unique, akin to the Saligrama that is representative of Vishnu Bhagavan. This Shivalingam is a swayambu lingam and the composition is said to be cryptocrystalline quartz, agate, basalt chalcedony, iron oxide of meteoric origin and goethite and is said to possess high vibrations and on hardness measures 7 on the Moh's scale.

With bated breath we awaited his arrival and soon a truck came into view with the precious cargo. We had called for a crane to unload a total of about 2.5 tonnes.

The crane gently placed each piece just inside our compound. Lord Shiva waited patiently for the day when he would move inside and be placed on the base and be settled to be worshiped by all.

Each day Aditya paid his respects, and Vayu Bhagavan sent cool winds to keep the lord comfortable.

The staff at Vaidyagrama endlessly searched for a team who could shift this massive manifestation of one of their favorites - Lord Shiva. Finally they located a group who accepted to come on the 27th of August.

When they came, much discussion happened and prayers filled every heart, the task at hand was immense and they needed the support of the gods for this shift to happen smoothly. They needed Shakthi and Buddhi.

Durga watched and knew that only she could bear the weight of the base, and she manifested in the Kusmanda. They placed the white pumpkin (in Sanskrit: Kusmanda) in place of wheels and with the lord's name on every lip pulled the crate. Devi Kusmanda infused them with energy while the pumpkin smoothly brought the 1.5 ton base into the hall. Durga manifests as Devi Kusmanda unusually on the 4th day of Navaratri, she gives direction and energy even to Surya Bhagavan. When she saw the need for this avatar she donned it to assist her devotees move her Lord.

The Kusmandas in the basket hearing of the supreme Seva their friends had done tried to move and clambered to be on top so they would be picked and could serve their Devi. When the movers came to pick the pumpkins they felt an energy as they carried them, the ones that were left behind basked in the glory of the ones that went to serve!

A copper plate etched with the Sree Chakra was placed beneath the base and once again they gently lowered the base onto 4 Kusmanda's that were thrilled at offering themselves to the Lord.

Once his base was ready the magnificent Lord settled with his vahana Nandi at his destination, just behind a

smaller version of him that will soon be housed in a garden location. Narmadeswar looked around, he was placed in Brahma Kamalam, the place of Srishti, of creation and knowledge, he noticed on his right was Vishnu in his manifestation as Bhuvarahaswamy with Bhumi Devi perched on his lap, so the sthithi karta was also there the sustainer with the Goddess of wealth.

The presence of Bhumi Devi is in sync with Vaidyagrama since she is the repository of all herbs, roots, shoots, trees and even minerals used for healing in Ayurveda. And now Narmadeshwar the Laya Karta with his consort Shakthi Mata in his grand form had descended. What a symbolic place of Srishti, Sthiti and Laya embodied in these beautiful deities.

The next phase of challenges had to be met now. We had to find the right Sivacharyars to come and seat the lingam with Ashta Bandham. This ashta bandham is a mixture of eight ingredients that become the adhesive that binds the lingam to the base. The preparation of this mixture is a long and detailed one. The ingredients that go into this mixture are a fine powder of the conch shell, gall nut, sealing wax, gooseberry, resin of the pinnus dammar, fine sand from two different confluences of three sacred rivers and finally cotton.

This mixture is pounded with hammers made from tamarind tree wood and the heat that generates makes it into a cohesive paste.

Onam festival arrived, Vaidyagrama wore a festival look with *poo Kollam* arranged in front of every *illam*. Sadya was served with tasty payasam to all. The full moon appeared, all of Bharath celebrated in diverse



ways, for some it was Raksha Bandhan, others upakarma and yet others it was celebrating the full moon in the month of Sravan. And Lord Shiva waited patiently silently observing the festivities.

The phones were busy dialing scores of numbers looking for the right people and Mata Durga's grace connected us to the best group from Kalipatti in Palakkad.

A group of Sivacharyar arrived on 31st morning. They started with chanting and various other rituals while some of them began hammering the ashta bandham again finally before its use. Anandhi the epitome of Mahalakshmi arrived with her little calf in tow to witness the events. Devi Mahalakshmi was worshipped, the ashta bandham was applied and once it was finished, Anandhi walked into the Brahma Kamalan with her little calf to bless everyone and shower congratulations to Narmadeshwar and his consort and bestow wealth for his puja.

On the 30th a Brahmachari from the Kailash Math Bhakti Dham arrived to be a part of the festivities. On the 31st it was the Brahmachari's turn to offer puja. He had brought Rudraksha malas that adorned Narmadeshwar and gave him his most handsome appearance.

A few moments of silence in Brahma Kamalam endows one with energy and calm.

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