

Group 3

MANICKAVASAGAR

Saint Manickavasagar was born in the 9th Century AD in Tiruvadavur, near Madurai, and was named Vadavurar by his parents. Because of his great knowledge, he became friends with the King of Madurai and soon became his trusted chief minister.

One day, the king gave Vadavurar a large sum of money and asked him to buy some horses for the King's cavalry. While he was travelling there he heard the Kirtan of Lord Siva being sung in a garden in Tiruperundurai. There he saw Lord Siva disguised as a Siva Yogi, seated under a tree.

He fell at the feet of the Lord and sang his first Thiruvagasam hymn to Lord Siva "Namachivaya Valzha". His lyrics were so moving that Lord Siva gave him the name "Manickavasagar" - he of the gem-like utterances. Lord Siva gave him the wisdom of Shaivism and, from that moment, he dedicated his life to Lord Shiva. He used all the money, that the King had given him to buy the horses, instead to build a Siva Temple!

When the King heard what he had done, he was very angry. Lord Shiva gave Manickavasagar a huge diamond and said, "I will bring the king's horses on Avani Mulam. Go and give this diamond to the king."

But the king became impatient and thought that he had been tricked. So he threw Manickavasagar in jail.

The horses came on the morning of Avani Mulam, and Lord Shiva came in the form of a groom! How merciful is the Lord towards His devotees! But then the next day, through the Leela of the Lord, the horses turned into jackals! The king became really angry. He tortured Manickavasagar and made him stand in a dry river bed under the scorching sun. At once, Lord Shiva made the river flood in order to cool His special devotee. But the whole town was also flooded and the king blamed Manickavasagar.

Everyone in the kingdom had to help build a dam to hold back the river, and Lord Shiva came, disguised as a labourer, to help an old lady. But he pretended to be lazy and did not do the work! The King saw this and became very angry. He decided to have Him beaten with a cane, as punishment. Lord Siva revealed His divinity by making everyone else feel the pain, even the King! The King realised his mistake, released Manickavasagar. Saint Manickavasagar left Madurai, visited many temples and shrines and finally reached the holy city of Chidambaram.

Here, Lord Nataraja Himself, the Lord of Chidambaram, appeared before him, in order to write down the Thiruvagasam hymns that he had composed! When He had finished, the Lord placed them on the steps of the Chit Sabha (dance hall) and disappeared. When the temple priests saw the songs, and Lord Nataraja's signature, they asked Manickavasagar to clarify the meaning of the songs. Manickavasagar took them into the temple, pointed to Lord Nataraja and said, "He is the clarifier!" He then entered the Moolasthanam & merged with his beloved Lord.