

SRI DATTATREYA JAYANTHI

This is celebrated on Margasirsha suddha pournima, the birthday of Guru Dattatreya and in temples dedicated to this Guru, he is taken in a procession around the temple prakaras.

Pooja procedure : Seven days before Pournima “Sri Guru Charithra” and related works are recited (called Saptha) and at the exact time of his birth, the chapter pertaining to this is read. Bhajans and sankirtans are arranged.

Story of Datta Pournima

Lord Vishnu took ten avatars (incarnations) Dasavathara, to annihilate the wicked and the miscreants and to re-establish the principles of religion, on various occasions. He took many other avatars called “Upaavatars” to reestablish dharma, and one such is the avatar of “Dattatreya”.

The story of Dattatreya revolves around the story of Atri Maharishi. Lord Brahma created seven rishis, Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulahar, Kritu and Vasishta.

Atri maharishi married Anasuya, a very beautiful lady and at the same time a Maha Pativratha (chaste woman) Her piety and her great eagerness for Athiti worship (reverence towards guests) was too widely known as to attract even Gods like Indra. The Sun God, out of reverence to her, is said to have reduced the intensity of his rays falling on her dwelling. Agni, the fire god, did not harm her. Mother earth was so much afraid, that she would make her surface so smooth as not to harm Anasuya’s feet. Such was her fame and beauty.

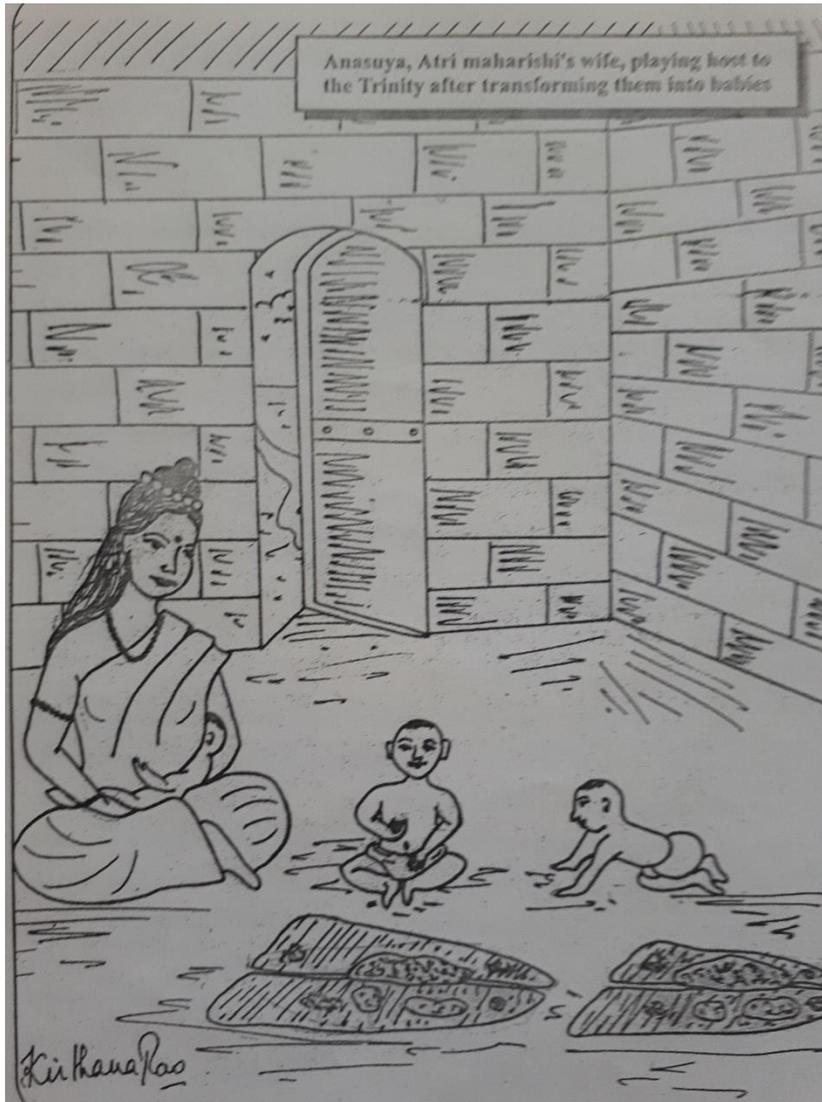
The Trimurthis, Lords Brahma, Vishnu and Siva having come to know of her fame, decided to test her chastity. The three dressed themselves as Sanyasins and reached Anasuya’s house disguised as guest, when her husband Atri had gone for ablutions.

As is her wont, Anasuya welcomed the guests, offered argya, padya and enquired of their well being. The guests in disguise, told her that they were very hungry and would like to have food of their choice to appease their hunger. Anasuya requested them to first finish their ablutions and come back, when food will be ready. The guests said that they had already finished all their daily duties that they wanted food immediately as they cannot wait for Atri to come back, as they were very hungry.

Anasuya then made all arrangements to serve food. She provided wooden planks for sitting, spread plantain leaves, water for drinking and served rice and ghee. But to her surprise, the guests made a very unusual demand. They said that they had come all the way here to see her beauty and so she should serve food, naked without any clothing.

Taken back, Anasuya, the foremost among pativratas began to think aloud and said to herself, “These guests are not ordinary people. They should be some great people who have come to test my chastity. Yet, I cannot refuse to fulfil their desire. If I be pure at heart and my husband’s penance is firm and real, what can Cupid do to me?” So saying, she went inside and first invoking her husband and thinking that these guests are like my children, undressed herself and came out. What a surprise! The three guests had been

truly changed into three young babies and lay crying. Anasuya tied her saree, breastfed each child in turn and satisfied their hunger.



Meanwhile, Atri returned at Noon, having finished all his ablutions and was surprised to his wife, Anasuya, singing lullaby to children and understood the whole set of events that happened by his gyana-drishti (occult powers) and made obeisance to the Trimurthis (Trinity). In return, the Trinity requested Anasuya to ask for a boon.

Anasuya immediately said that the Trimurthis should be henceforth treated as her children and that they should all look alike. Lord Brahma became Chandrama (Moon), Lord Vishnu became Dattatreya and Lord Shiva became Durvasa.

Hence Dattatreya is called "Atri nandana guru govinda, Dattatreya paramananda". The day of Dattatreya's birth is celebrated as Dattatreya Jayanthi.