

Kataragama, the domain of God Skanda (Lord Murugan Katirkaman, Kadirkamam, Subrahmanya, Kandasamy, Kadiradeva, Katiradeva, Katiravel, Karttikeya, and Tarakajith) located in the Deep South of Sri Lanka, adjoining the popular Ruhuna Yala National Park and ancient Sithulpawwa Buddhist Monastery, is a multi-religious sacred city that contains a Buddhist temple, Hindu shrine and Islamic Mosque.


<http://kataragama.org/news/benevolent.god.skanda.htm>

سكاندا

skanda - سكاندا
skanda [Noun]
• god of war

<http://www.bdword.com/arabic-meaning-or-translation-of-skanda>

Σκάνδα

Γιώργος Εχέδωρος - βαλκανικο περισκοπιο 

www.echedoros-a.gr/2009/08/kataragama-dionysus-alexander.html

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सकंद

SKANDA


GENDER: Masculine


USAGE: [Indian](#), [Hinduism](#)

OTHER SCRIPTS: [सकंद](#) (Hindi, Sanskrit)

Meaning & History

Means "spurting, spilling" in [Sanskrit](#). In Hindu belief this was the name of the god of war, also known as Kartikeya or Murugan. He is worshipped especially by the Tamils in southern India.

[सकंद \(Sakanad \) : meaning of सकंद in English - Definition ...](#) 

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Skanda

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Chapter 1

Skanda

Skanda is the name of deities popular amongst Hindus and Buddhists.

- **Skanda**, a Hindu deity also known as Kartikeya and Murugan and Subhramanya
- **Skanda (Buddhism)**, a popular Deva and/or Bodhisattva popular in Chinese Buddhism
- **Skanda Purana**, a Hindu Purana (Scripture) dedicated to the Deity

Skanda can also refer to

- **Skanda**, a Spanish folk music band

Skanda can also be confused with

- **Skandha**, which in Buddhist phenomenology and soteriology, are the five “aggregates” which categorize all individual experience.

Chapter 2

Skanda Purana

The *Skanda Purana* is the largest *Mahapurana*, a genre of eighteen Hindu religious texts.^[1] The text is devoted mainly to the *lilas* of *Kartikeya*, a son of *Shiva* and *Parvati*, who is also known as *Skanda*. It also contains a number of legends about *Shiva*, and the holy places associated with him. This *Mahapurana* was recited by the sage *Vyasa*, and is available in distinct parts, sometimes fragmented too.

2.1 The contents

Traditionally, the whole corpus of texts which are considered as part of the *Skanda Purana* is grouped in two ways. According to a tradition, these are grouped in six *samhitās*, each of which consists of several *khaṇḍas*. According to another tradition, these are grouped in seven *khaṇḍas*. The currently available printed editions of this text are published by the Bangabasi Press, Calcutta, the Shri Venkateshvara Press, Bombay (1910) and the N.K. Press, Lucknow and all these editions include seven *khaṇḍas* (parts): *Maheśvara*, *Viṣṇu* or *Vaiṣṇava*, *Brahma*, *Kāśī*, *Āvantya*, *Nāgara* and *Prabhāsa*.^[2] In 1999–2003, an English translation of this text was published by the Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi in 20 volumes. This translation is also based on a text divided into seven *khaṇḍas*.

2.1.1 The seven khandas

The *Maheśvara Khaṇḍa* consists of three sections:^[2]

- the *Kedāra Khaṇḍa* (35 chapters)
- the *Kaumārikā Khaṇḍa* or *Kumārikā Khaṇḍa* (66 chapters) and

- the *Arunācala Khaṇḍa* or *Arunācala Māhātmya*, further divided into two parts:

- *Pūrvārdha* (13 chapters) and
- *Uttarārdha* (24 chapters)

The *Viṣṇu Khaṇḍa* or *Vaiṣṇava Khaṇḍa* consists of nine sections:^[2]

- *Veṅkaṭācalamāhātmya* (40 chapters)
- *Puruṣottamakṣetramāhātmya* (49 chapters)
- *Badarikāśramamāhātmya* (8 chapters)
- *Kārttikamāsamāhātmya* (36 chapters)
- *Mārgaśirṣamāsamāhātmya* 17 chapters)
- *Bhāgavatamāhātmya* (4 chapters)
- *Vaiśākhmāsamāhātmya* (25 chapters)
- *Ayodhyāmāhātmya* (10 chapters) and
- *Vāsudevamāhātmya* (32 chapters)

The *Brahma Khaṇḍa* has three sections:^[2]

- *Setumāhātmya* (52 chapters)
- *Dharmāraṇya Khaṇḍa* (40 chapters) and
- *Uttara Khaṇḍa* or *Brahmottara Khaṇḍa* (22 chapters)

The *Kāśī Khaṇḍa* is divided into two parts:^[2]

- *Pūrvārdha* (50 chapters) and

- Uttarārdha (50 chapters)

The *Āvantya Khaṇḍa* consists of:^[2]

- Avantikṣetramāhātmya (71 chapters)
- Caturāṣṭīlingamāhātmya (84 chapters) and
- Revā Khaṇḍa (232 chapters)

The *Nāgara Khaṇḍa* (279 chapters) consists of Tirthamāhātmya.^[2]

The *Prabhāsa Khaṇḍa* (491 chapters) consists of:^[2]

- Prabhāsakṣetramāhātmya (365 chapters)
- Vastrāpathakṣetramāhātmya (19 chapters)
- Arvuda Khaṇḍa (63 chapters) and
- Dvārakāmāhātmya (44 chapters)

2.1.2 The six samhitās

The second type of division of the *Skanda Purana* is found in some texts like *Hālasyamāhātmya* of the Agastya Saṁhitā or the Śaṁkarī Saṁhitā, *Sambhava Khaṇḍa* of the Śaṁkarī Saṁhitā, *Śivamāhātmya Khaṇḍa* of the Sūta Saṁhitā and *Kālikā Khaṇḍa* of the Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā. According to these texts, the *Skanda Purana* consists of six saṁhitās (sections):

- the Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā
- the Sūta Saṁhitā
- the Śaṁkarī Saṁhitā
- the Vaiṣṇavī Saṁhitā
- the Brāhmī Saṁhitā and
- the Saura Saṁhitā

The manuscripts of the Sanatkumāra Saṁhitā, the Śaṁkarī Saṁhitā, the Sūta Saṁhitā and the Saura Saṁhitā are extant. A manuscript of a commentary on the Sūta Saṁhitā by Madhavācārya is also available.^[2]

2.1.3 The other texts

The manuscripts of several other texts which claim to be part of the *Skanda Purana* are found partially or wholly. Some of the notable texts amongst these are: *Himavat Khaṇḍa* which contains Nepālamāhātmya (30 chapters), *Kanakādri Khaṇḍa*, *Bhīma Khaṇḍa*, *Śivarahasya Khaṇḍa*, *Sahyādri Khaṇḍa*, *Ayodhyā Khaṇḍa*, *Mathurā Khaṇḍa* and *Pātāla Khaṇḍa*.^[2]

2.1.4 The popular narratives

Some of the popular narratives described in the *Skanda Purana* are:

- The yajña (sacrifice) of Prajapati Daksha
- The churning of the ocean and the emergence of Amrita (Ambrosia)
- The story of the demon Tarakasura
- The birth of Goddess Parvati and her marriage to Lord Shiva
- The birth of Kartikeya
- The killing of the demon Tarakasura by Kartikeya
- The killing of Pralambasura
- The queries of Karamdham
- The killing of the demons Shumbh, Nishimbh and Mahishasura
- An account of Vishnukund
- The story of Padmavati
- A description of various holy places associated with Shiva and Skanda
- The story of Trishanku and sage Vishvamitra
- A description of Narakas (Hell)
- A description of Jyotirlingas – the important holy shrines associated with Lord Shiva.
- A description of Navadurgas

2.2 See also

- Guru Gita
- Kachiyapper wrote the Tamil counterpart, the Kandapurānam
- Kartikay
- Kartikkeya

2.3 Notes

- [1] Ganesh Vasudeo Tagare (1996). *Studies in Skanda Purāṇa*. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, ISBN 81-208-1260-3
- [2] Shastri, P. (1995) *Introduction to the Puranas*, New Delhi: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, pp.118–20

2.4 Further reading

- Mani, Vettam. *Puranic Encyclopedia*. 1st English ed. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975.

2.5 External links

- original Sanskrit text
- Excerpts from Skanda Purana
- Skanda Purāṇa 1–2
- Skanda Purāṇa 3–4
- Sanskrit text

Chapter 3

Skanda (Buddhism)

This article is about the bodhisattva. For the term in Buddhist phenomenology by a similar name, see [Skandha](#).

Skanda, also known as **Wei Tuo**, is a [Mahayana bodhisattva](#) regarded as a devoted guardian of [Buddhist monasteries](#) who guards the [Buddhist](#) teachings. He is also sometimes called in the Chinese tradition “Hufa Weituo Zuntian Pusa”, meaning “Honored Dharma Protector Skanda Bodhisattva”, because he is the leader of the twenty-four celestial guardian deities mentioned in the *Golden Light Sutra*.

In Chinese temples, Skanda faces the statue of the Buddha in the main shrine. In others, he is on the far right of the main shrine, whereas on the left is his counterpart, Sangharama (personified as the historical general Guan Yu). In Chinese sutras, his image is found at the end of the sutra, a reminder of his vow to protect and preserve the teachings.

According to legends, Skanda was the son of a virtuous king who had complete faith in Buddha’s teachings. When the Buddha entered nirvana, the Buddha instructed Skanda to guard the Dharma. It was his duty to protect members of the sangha when they are disturbed by Mara, the tempter, and also to resolve conflicts amongst members of the sangha. A few days after the Buddha’s passing and cremation, evil demons robbed his relics. Skanda’s vow of protecting the faith and Dharma was proven when he managed to defeat the evil demons and returned the relics.

3.1 Origins

Stories vary on how Skanda was accepted into the traditional Chinese Buddhist pantheon. Some have proposed that Skanda’s features were adapted from a Chinese deity who appeared in the Chinese classical Ming novel *Canonization of the Gods*. However, the existence of illustrated Skanda images predating the Ming Dynasty set his origins back to an earlier period in the development of Chinese Buddhism.

Skanda is described as a young man fully clad in the armor and headgear of a Chinese general, and is usually leaning on a vajra staff. Some suggest that Skanda may have come from [Hinduism](#) as the war deity [Kartikeya](#) / [Muruga](#) (Tamil), who bears the title Skanda. Others point out that Skanda might also be a manifestation of [Vajrapani](#), a bodhisattva who bears some relations to Skanda because they both wield vajras as weapons, are portrayed with flaming halos, and are both heavenly protectors of Buddhism. Skanda may be connected through [Vajrapani](#) through a theory to his connection to [Greco-Buddhism](#), as Wei Tuo’s image is reminiscent of the [Heracles](#) depiction of [Vajrapani](#).

Although Skanda is only a deva, he is very often addressed as a bodhisattva.

3.1.1 As Miao Shan’s lover

When the bodhisattva [Avalokitesvara](#) was reincarnated as the princess [Miao Shan](#), Skanda (known as [Wei Tuo](#) in this story) was one of her cruel father’s generals. He loved Miao Shan but realized he could not possibly be a proper partner to her, since she was a pure person. However, Wei Tuo was inspired by Miao Shan’s kindness so

he decided to stay faithful and devoted to Miao Shan, even if she wasn't his wife. The two escaped Miao Shan's father, and the general-suitor helped build Miao Shan a temple and a kingdom of her own. Soon however, the cruel king found them and killed them both. The general, because of his devotion to Guan Yin, transformed into a bodhisattva himself, who vowed to always serve and protect Guan Yin. His appearance as a Chinese general is the direct forbear to his connection with Miao Shan.

- [Jetsun Dolma](#)
- [Kartikay](#) (Hindu god of war)
- [Kartikkeya](#) (Hindu god of war)

3.1.2 As a warrior

Another story says that Miao Shan was told to be killed by her grandmother. Her grandmother forced Miao Shan to commit suicide by leaping into the sea because she was thought to have been an incarnation of a demon, when in fact she was not. The emperor told a loyal soldier named Luo Ping to pretend to throw Miao Shan to the ocean. He brought her with Yin Ma, the mother of Wei Tuo to her village. Years passed, an evil fish demon came. A disloyal soldier named Huo Yi, was sent from the fish demon to kill Miao Shan. The fish demon wanted revenge on Miao Shan because she was the incarnation of *Ci Hang Da Shi*, a Buddhist deva that put her in a lotus pond. Huo Yi and his troops went to the village where Miao Shan and Wei Tuo lived and fought. Huo Yi's son killed Wei Tuo. After Miao Shan became the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, she made Skanda a bodhisattva guardian. He became a bodhisattva because he took care of Miao Shan and loved her as a sister.

According to the lunar calendar, his birthday is at the 3rd day of the 6th lunar month.

3.2 Gallery

- [Skanda as portrayed by Zhao Mengfu during the Yuan Dynasty.](#)
- [Skanda at Beijing Miaoying Temple](#)
- [Wei Tuo at Yonghe Temple, Beijing](#)

3.3 See also

- [Dharmapala](#)
- [Śakra \(Buddhism\)](#)

Chapter 4

Kartikeya

“Muruga” redirects here. For the 2007 film, see *Muruga* (film).

Kartikeya, also known as **Skanda**, **Murugan** and **Subramaniyan**, is the Hindu god of war. He is the commander-in-chief of the army of the *devas* (gods) and the son of Shiva and Parvati.

Murugan is often referred to as “Tamil Kadavul” (meaning “God of Tamils”) and is worshiped primarily in areas with Tamil influences, especially South India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Malaysia, Singapore and Reunion Island. His six most important shrines in India are the Arupadaiveedu temples, located in Tamil Nadu. In Sri Lanka, Hindus as well as Buddhists revere the sacred historical Nallur Kandaswamy temple in Jaffna and Katirkāmam Temple situated deep south.^[1] Hindus in Malaysia also pray to Lord Murugan at the Batu Caves and various temples where *Thaipusam* is celebrated with grandeur.

In Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Kartikeya is known as Subrahmanya with a temple at Kukke Subramanya known for *Sarpa shanti* rites dedicated to Him and another famous temple at Ghati Subramanya also in Karnataka. In Bengal and Odisha, he is popularly known as Kartikeya (meaning 'son of Krittika').^[2]

4.1 Other names

Like most Hindu deities, Subrahmanya is known by many other names, including **Senthil**, **Vēlan**, **Kumāran** (meaning 'prince or child or young one'), **Swaminatha** (meaning 'smart' or 'clever'), **Saravaṇa**, **Arumugam** or **Shanmuga** (meaning 'one with six faces'), **Dandapāni** (meaning God with a Club), **Guhan** or *Guruguha* (meaning 'cave-dweller'), **Subrahmanya**, **Kar-**

tikeya and **Skanda** (meaning 'that which is spilled or oozed').^{[3][4]} He was also known as **Mahasena** and the Kadamba Dynasty kings worshiped him by this name.^[5]

4.2 Historical development

4.2.1 Vedas

The Atharva Veda describes Kumaran as 'Agnibhuh' because he is form of 'Agni' (Fire God) & Agni hold in his hand when kumaran born. The Satapatha Brahmana refers to him as the son of Rudra and the six faces of Rudra. The Taittiriya Aranyaka contains the Gayatri mantra for Shanmukha. The Chandogya Upanishad refers to Skanda as the “way that leads to wisdom”. The Baudhayana Dharmasutra mentions Skanda as 'Mahasena' and 'Subrahmanya.' The Aranya Parva canto of the Mahabharata relates the legend of Kartikeya Skanda in considerable detail. The Skanda Purana is devoted to the narrative of Kartikeya.^[6] The Upanishads also constantly make a reference to a Supreme Being called Guha, the indweller.

4.2.2 Hindu epics

The first elaborate account of Kartikeya's origin occurs in the Mahabharata. In a complicated story, he is said to have been born from Agni and Svaha, after the latter impersonated the six of the seven wives of the Saptarishi (Seven Sages). The actual wives then become the Pleiades. Kartikeya is said to have been born to destroy the Asura Mahisha.^[7] (In later mythology, Mahisha became the adversary of Durga.) Indra attacks Kartikeya as he sees the latter as a threat, until Shiva inter-



Indra gives Devasena as wife to Kartikeya; scene from the Mahabharata.

venes and makes Kartikeya the commander-in-chief of the army of the Devas. He is also married to Devasena, Indra's daughter. The origin of this marriage lies probably in the punning of 'Deva-sena-pati'. It can mean either lord of Devasena or Lord of the army (sena) of Devas. But according to Shrii Shrii Anandamurti, in his master work on Shiva^[8] and other works, Kartikeya was married to Devasenā and that is on the ground of his name as Devasena's husband, Devasenāpati, misinterpreted as Deva-senāpati (Deva's general) that he was granted the title general and made the Deva's army general.^[9]

The Ramayana version is closer to the stories told in the Puranas discussed below.

4.2.3 Sangam Tamil literature

Tolkappiyam, possibly the most ancient of the Tamil literature mentions him as "Seyon", the three other gods referred in Tolkappiyam are "Maayon", "Indhiran" and "Kotravai. Extant Sangam works, dated between the

3rd century BCE and 5th century CE glorified Murugan, "the red god seated on the blue peacock, who is ever young and resplendent," as "the favoured god of the Tamils."^[10] The Sangam poetry divided space and Tamil land into five allegorical areas (tinai) and according to the Tirumurugarruppatai (c. 400–450 AD) attributed to the great Sangam poet Nakkiirar, Murugan was the presiding deity the Kurinci region (hilly area). (Tirumurugarruppatai is a deeply devotional poem included in the ten idylls (Pattupattu) of the age of the third Sangam). The other Sangam era works in Tamil that refer to Murugan in detail include the Paripaatal, the Akananuru and the Purananuru. One poem in the Paripaatal describes the veneration of Murugan thus:

*"We implore thee not for boons of enjoyment or wealth,
But for thy grace beatific, love and virtuous deeds."*

According to the Tamil devotional work, Thiruppugazh, "Murugan never hesitates to come to the aid of a devotee when called upon in piety or distress". In another work, Thirumurukkarrupatai, he is described as a god of eternal youth;

*His face shines a myriad rays light and removes the
darkness from this world.^[11]*

The references to Murugan can be traced back to the first millennium BCE. There are references to Murugan in Kautilya's Arthashastra, in the works of Patanjali, in Kalidasa's epic poem the Kumarasambhavam. The Kushanas, who governed from what is today Peshawar, and the Yaudheyas, a republican clan in the Punjab, struck coins bearing the image of Skanda. The deity was venerated also by the Ikshvakus, an Andhra dynasty, and the Guptas.^[6] The worship of Kumāra was one of the six principal sects of Hinduism at the time of Adi Shankara. The Shanmata system propagated by him included this sect. In many Shiva and Devi temples of Tamil Nadu, Murugan is installed on the left of the main deity. The story of His birth goes as follows:

Sati immolated herself in a pyre as her father King Daksha had insulted Shiva, her Lord. She was reborn as Parvathi or Uma, daughter of the King of Himalayas, Himavan. She then married her Lord

Shiva. The Devas were under onslaught from the Asuras whose leader was Soorapadman. He had been granted boons that only Lord Shiva or his seed could kill him. Fearless he vanquished the Devas and made them his slaves. The Devas ran to Vishnu for help who told them that it was merely their fault for attending Daksha's yagna, without the presence of Lord Shiva. After this, they ran to Shiva for help. Shiva decided to take action against Soorapadman's increasing conceit. He frowned and his third eye- the eye of knowledge- started releasing sparks. These were six sparks in total. Agni had the responsibility to take them to Saravana Lake. As he was carrying them, the sparks were growing hotter and hotter that even the Lord of Fire could not withstand the heat. Soon after Muruga was born on a lotus in the Saravana Lake with six faces, giving him the name Arumukhan. Lord Shiva and Parvati visited and tears of joy started flowing as they witnessed the most handsome child. Shiva and Parvathi gave the responsibility of taking care of Muruga to the six Kritika sisters. Muruga grew up to be a handsome, intelligent, powerful, clever youth. All the Devas applauded at their saviour, who had finally come to release them from their woes. Muruga became the supreme general of the demi-gods, then escorted the devas and led the army of the devas to victory against the asuras.

4.2.4 Puranas

Though slightly varying versions occur in the Puranas, they broadly follow the same pattern. By this period, the identification of Shiva/Rudra with Agni, that can be traced back to the Vedas and Brahmanas, had clearly



Kartikeya (right), Ganesha, Shiva, and Parvati.

made Kartikeya the son of Shiva.

The *Skanda Purana* narrates that Shiva first wed Dakshayani (also named Sati), the first incarnation of Adi Shakti the granddaughter of Brahma, and the daughter of Daksha. Daksha a Vishnu devotee never liked Shiva, who, symbolizing destruction of evil, detachment, who lives a simple life. Daksha publicly insults Shiva in a Yagna ceremony, and Dakshayani immolates herself. The Yagna is destroyed although protected by all the other Gods and the rishis. Taraka believed that, because Shiva is an ascetic and his earlier marriage was conducted with great difficulty, his remarriage was out of the question, hence his boon of being killed by Shiva's son alone would give him invincibility.

The Devas manage to get Shiva married to Parvati (who was Dakshayani, reborn), by making Manmatha (also known as Kama), the God of love awaken him from his penance, but Manmatha incurred the Lord's wrath indicated by the opening his third eye – "Netri Kann", and being destroyed and resurrected. Shiva hands over his effulgence of the third eye used to destroy Manmatha to Agni, as he alone is capable of handling it until it becomes the desired offspring. But even Agni, tortured by its heat,

hands it over to **Ganga** who in turn deposits it in a lake in a forest of reeds (**sharavanam**). Then Goddess **Parvati**, took the form of this water body as she alone is capable of taming the **Tejas** of **Shiva**, her consort. . The child is finally born in this forest (**vana**) with six faces: **eesanam**, **sathpurusham**, **vamadevam**, **agoram**, **sathyojatham** and **adhomugam**. He is first spotted and cared for by six women representing the **Pleiades** — **Kritika** in Sanskrit. He thus gets named **Kartikeya**. As a young lad, he destroys **Tarakasur**. He is also called **Kumara** (Tamil for “youth”).

4.2.5 Legends

Given that legends related to **Murugan** are recounted separately in several Hindu epics, some differences between the various versions are observed. Some Sanskrit epics and puranas indicate that he was the elder son of **Shiva**. This is suggested by the legend connected to his birth; the wedding of **Shiva** and **Parvati** being necessary for the birth of a child who would vanquish the asura named **Taraka**. Also, **Kartikeya** is seen helping **Shiva** fight the newborn **Ganesha**, **Shiva's** other son, in the **Shiva Purana**. In the **Ganapati Khandam** of the **Brahma Vaivarta Purana**, he is seen as the elder son of **Shiva** and **Ganesha** as the younger. In South India, it is believed that he is the younger of the two. A Puranic story has **Ganesha** obtain a divine fruit of knowledge from **Narada** winning a contest with **Murugan**. While **Murugan** speeds around the world thrice to win the contest for the fruit, **Ganesha** circumambulates **Shiva** and **Parvati** thrice as an equivalent and is given the fruit. After winning it, he offers to give the fruit to his upset brother. After this event, **Ganesha** was considered the elder brother owing as a tribute to his wisdom. Many of the major events in **Murugan's** life take place during his youth, and legends surrounding his birth are popular. This has encouraged the worship of **Murugan** as a child-God, very similar to the worship of the child **Krishna** in north India. He is married to two wives, **Valli** and **Devasena**. This lead to a very interesting name : **Devasenapati** viz. **Pati** (husband) of **Devsena** and/or **Senapati** (commander in chief) of **Dev** (gods).

4.3 Symbolism

Kartikeya symbols are based on the weapons – **Vel**, the Divine Spear or Lance that he carries and his mount the



Sculpture of the god Skanda, from Kannauj, north India, circa 8th century.

peacock. He is sometimes depicted with many weapons including: a sword, a javelin, a mace, a discus and a bow although more usually he is depicted wielding a *sakti* or spear. This symbolizes his purification of human ills. His javelin is used to symbolize his far reaching protection, his discus symbolizes his knowledge of the truth, his mace represents his strength and his bow shows his ability to defeat all ills. His peacock mount symbolizes his destruction of the ego.

His six heads represent the six *siddhis* bestowed upon yogis over the course of their spiritual development. This corresponds to his role as the *bestower of siddhis*.

4.4 Worship through ages



Murugan with his vel, rooster flag and peacock mount at Pachaimalai near Gobichettipalayam

4.4.1 Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, Murugan has continued to be popular with all classes of society right since the Sangam age. This has led to more elaborate accounts of his mythology in the Tamil language, culminating in the Tamil version of Skanda Purana, called *Kandha Purānam*, written by Kacchiappa Sivachariyar (1350–1420 AD.) of Kumara Kottam in the city of Kanchipuram. (He was a scholar in Tamil literature, and a votary of the Shaiva Siddhanta philosophy.)

He is married to two deities, Valli, a daughter of a tribal chief and Deivayanai (also called Devasena), the daughter of Indhra. During His bachelorhood, Lord Murugan is also regarded as **Kumaraswami** (or Bachelor God), *Kumara* meaning a bachelor and *Swami* meaning God. Muruga rides a peacock and wields a bow in battle. The lance called *Vel* in Tamil is a weapon closely associated with

him. The *Vel* was given to him by his mother, Parvati, and embodies her energy and power. His army's standard depicts a rooster. In the war, Surapadman was split into two, and each half was granted a boon by Murugan. The halves, thus turned into the peacock (his mount) and the rooster his flag, which also “refers to the sun”.^[12]

As Muruga is worshipped predominantly in Tamil Nadu, many of his names are of Tamil origin. These include **Senthil**, the red or formidable one; **Arumugam**, the six-faced one; **Guhan** and **Maal-Marugan**, the son-in-law of Vishnu. Murugan is venerated throughout the Tamil year. There is a six-day period of fast and prayer in the Tamil month of Aippasi known as the Skanda Shasti. He is worshipped at Thaipusam, celebrated by Tamil communities worldwide near the full moon of the Tamil month Thai. This commemorates the day he was given a *Vel* or lance by his mother in order to vanquish the asuras. Thirukarthigai or the full moon of the Tamil month of Karthigai signifies his birth. Each Tuesday of the Tamil month of Adi is also dedicated to the worship of Murugan. Tuesday in the Hindu tradition connotes Mangala, the god of planet Mars and war.

4.4.2 Other parts of India

Historically, God Kartikeya was immensely popular in the Indian subcontinent. One of the major Puranas, the Skanda Purana is dedicated to him. In the Bhagavad-Gita (Ch.10, Verse 24), Krishna, while explaining his omnipresence, names the most perfect being, mortal or divine, in each of several categories. While doing so, he says: “Among generals, I am Skanda, the lord of war.”

Kartikeya's presence in the religious and cultural sphere can be seen at least from the Gupta age. Two of the Gupta kings, Kumaragupta and Skandagupta, were named after him. He is seen in the Gupta sculptures and in the temples of Ellora and Elephanta. As the commander of the divine armies, he became the patron of the ruling classes. His youth, beauty and bravery was much celebrated in Sanskrit works like the Kathasaritsagara. Kalidasa made the birth of Kumara the subject of a lyrical epic, the *Kumaarasambhavam*. In ancient India, Kartikeya was also regarded as the patron deity of thieves, as may be inferred from the *Mrichchakatikam*, a Sanskrit play by Shudraka, and in the *Vetala-panchvimshati*, a medieval collection of tales. This association is linked to the fact that Kartikeya had dug through the Krauncha mountain to kill Taraka and his brothers (in the *Mrichchakatikam*,

Sarivilaka prays to him before tunnelling into the hero's house).

However, Kartikeya's popularity in North India receded from the Middle Ages onwards, and his worship is today virtually unknown except in parts of Haryana. There is a very famous temple dedicated to Him in the town of Pehowa in Haryana and this temple is very well known in the adjoining areas, especially because women are not allowed anywhere close to it. Women stay away from this temple in Pehowa town of Haryana because this shrine celebrates the *Brahmachari* form of Kartikeya. Reminders of former devotions to him include a temple at Achaleshwar, near Batala in Punjab, and another temple of Skanda atop the Parvati hill in Pune, Maharashtra. Another vestige of his former popularity can be seen in Bengal and Odisha, where he is worshipped during the Durga Puja festivities alongside Durga. Lord Subramanya is the major deity among the Hindus of northern Kerala. Lord Subramanya is worshipped with utmost devotion in districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi in the state of Karnataka. Rituals like nagaradhane are unique to this region.

West Bengal and Bangladesh

Kartikeya also known as Kartik or Kartika is also worshipped in West Bengal, and Bangladesh on the last day of the Hindu month of 'Kartik'. However, the popularity of Kartik Puja (worshipping Kartik) is decreasing now, and Lord Kartik is primarily worshipped among those who intend to have a son. In Bengal, traditionally, many people drop images of Kartik inside the boundaries of different households, who all are either newly married, or else, intend to get a son to carry on with their ancestry. Lord Kartik is also associated to the Babu Culture prevailed in historic Kolkata, and hence, many traditional old Bengali paintings still show Kartik dressed in traditional Bengali style. Also, in some parts of West Bengal, Kartik is traditionally worshipped by the ancestors of the past royal families too, as in the district of Malda. Kartik Puja is also popular among the prostitutes. This can probably be linked to the fact that, the prostitutes mostly got clients from the upper class babus in old Kolkata, who all, in turn, had been associated to the image of Kartik (as discussed above). In Bansberia (Hooghly district) Kartik Puja festival is celebrated like Durga puja of Kolkata, Jagadhatri puja in Chandannagar for consecutive four days. The festival starts on 17 November every year and on 16 November in case



Kartikeya worshipped in Durga Puja in Kolkata

of Leap year.^[13] Some of the must see Puja committees are Bansberia Kundugoli Nataraj, Khamarapara Milan Samity RadhaKrishna, Kishor Bahini, Mitali Sangha, Yuva Sangha, Bansberia Pratap Sangha and many more.

In Durga Puja in Bengal, Kartikeya is considered to be a son of Parvati or Durga and Shiva along with his brother Ganesha and sisters Lakshmi and Saraswati.^[14]

Odisha

Kartikeya is worshiped during Durga Puja in Odisha as well as in various Shiva temples throughout the year. Kartik puja is celebrated in Cuttack along with various other parts of the state during the last phases of Hindu month of Kartik. Kartik purnima is celebrated with much joy and in a grand fashion in Cuttack and other parts in the state.



Kartikeya in Kartik Puja, Odisha.

4.4.3 Sri Lanka

Murugan is adored by both Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhists in Sri Lanka. Numerous temples exist throughout the island. He is a favorite deity of the common folk everywhere and it is said he never hesitates to come to the aid of a devotee when called upon. In the deeply Sinhalese south of Sri Lanka, Murugan is worshipped at the temple in Katirkāmam, where he is known as Kathiravel or Katragama Deviyo (Lord of Katragama). This temple is next to an old Buddhist place of worship. Local legend holds that Lord Murugan alighted in Kataragama and was smitten by Valli, one of the local aboriginal lasses. After a courtship, they were married. This event is taken to signify that Lord Murugan is accessible to all who worship and love him, regardless of their birth or heritage. The Nallur Kandaswamy temple, the Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple and the Sella Channithy Temple near Valvettiturai are the three foremost Murugan temples in Jaffna. The Chitravelayutha temple in Verukal on the border between Trincomalee and Batticaloa is also noteworthy as is the Mandur Kandaswamy temple in Batticaloa. The late medieval-era temple of the tooth in Kandy, dedicated to the tooth relic of the Buddha, has a Kataragama deiyo shrine adjacent to it dedicated to the veneration of Skanda in the Sinhalese tradition. Almost all buddhist temples house a shrine room for Kataragama deviyo (Murugan) reflecting the significance of Murugan in Sinhala Buddhism,

Based on archeological evidence found, it is believed that the Kiri Vehera was either renovated to build during the 1st century BCE. There are number of others inscriptions

and ruins.^[15]

By the 16th century the Kathiravel shrine at Katirkāmam had become synonymous with Skanda-Kumara who was a guardian deity of Sinhala Buddhism.^[16] The town was popular as a place of pilgrimage for Hindus from India and Sri Lanka by the 15th century. The popularity of the deity at the Kataragama temple was also recorded by the Pali chronicles of Thailand such as Jinkalmali in the 16th century. There are number of legends both Buddhist and Hindu that attribute supernatural events to the very locality.^[16] Scholars such as Paul Younger and Heinz Bechert speculate that rituals practiced by the native priests of Kataragama temple betray Vedda ideals of propitiation. Hence they believe the area was of Vedda veneration that was taken over by the Buddhist and Hindus in the medieval period.^[17]

4.5 Malaysia



Thaipusam at Batu Caves.

Lord Murugan is one of the most important deities worshipped by Tamil people in Malaysia and other South-

East Asian countries such as Singapore and Indonesia. **Thai Poosam** is one of the important festivals celebrated. Sri Subramanyar Temple at Batu Caves temple complex in Malaysia is dedicated to Lord Murugan.

4.6 Temples

The main temples of Murugan are located in Tamil Nadu and other parts of south India. They include the *Aru Padaiveedu* (six abodes) — Thiruchendur, Swamimalai, Pazhamudircholai, Thirupparangunram, Palani (Pazhani), Thiruthani and other important shrines like Mayilam, Sikkal, Marudamalai, Kundrathur, Vadapalani, Kandakottam, Thirupporur, Vallakottai, Vayalur, Thirumalaikoil, Pachaimalai and Pavalamalai near Gobichettipalayam. Malai Mandir, a prominent and popular temple complex in Delhi, is one of the few dedicated to Murugan in all of North India apart from the Pehowa temple in Haryana.



Murugan represented as Aarumugam (sixfaced)

There are many temples dedicated to Lord Subramanya in Kerala. Amongst them are Atiyambur Sri Subramanya Temple in Kanhangad Kasaragod, Payyannur Subramanya Swamy temple in Payyanur, Panmana Subramanya Swamy temple in Panmana and the Subramanya temple in Haripad. There is a temple in Skandagiri, Secunderabad and one in Bikkavolu, East Godavari district in the state of Andhra Pradesh. In Karnataka there is the Kukke Subramanya Temple where Lord Murugan is worshiped as the Lord of the serpents. Aaslesha Bali, Sarpa Samskara with nagapathista samarpa are major prayers here. There is a temple called Malai Mandir

in South Delhi. Malai means hill in Tamil. Mandir means temple in Hindi.

The key temples in Sri Lanka include the sylvan shrine in Kataragama / (Kadirgamam) or Kathirkamam in the deep south, the temple in Tirukovil in the east, the shrine in Embekke in the Kandyan region and the famed **Nallur Kandaswamy temple** in Jaffna. There are several temples dedicated to Lord Murugan in Malaysia, the most famous being the **Batu Caves** near Kuala Lumpur. There is a 42.7-m-high statue of Lord Murugan at the entrance to the Batu Caves, which is the largest Lord Murugan statue in the world. Sri Thandayuthapani Temple in Tank Road, Singapore is a major Hindu temple where each year the Thaipusam festival takes place with devotees of Lord Muruga carrying Kavadis seeking penance and blessings of the Lord.

In the United Kingdom, Highgate Hill Murugan temple is one of the oldest and most famous. In London, Sri Murugan Temple in Manor park is a well-known temple. In Midlands, Leicester Shri Siva Murugan Temple is gaining popularity recently. Skanda Vale in West Wales was founded by Guruji, a Tamil devotee of Subramaniam, and its primary deity is Lord Murugan. In Australia, Sydney Murugan temple in Parramatta (Mays Hill), Perth Bala Murugan temple in Mandogalup and Kundrathu Kumaran temple in Rockbank, Melbourne are major Hindu temples for all Australian Hindus and Murugan devotees. In New Zealand, there is a Thirumurugan Temple in Auckland and a Kurinji Kumaran Temple in Wellington, both dedicated to Lord Murugan. In the USA, Shiva Murugan Temple in Concord, Northern California and Murugan Temple of North America^[18] in Maryland, Washington DC region are popular. In Toronto, Canada, Canada Kanthasamy Temple is known amongst many Hindus in Canada. In Dollard-des-Ormeaux, a suburb of the city of Montreal in Canada, there is a monumental temple of Murugan. The Sri Sivasubramaniam Temple, located in the Sihl Valley in Adliswil, is the most famous and largest Hindu temple in Switzerland.^[19]

4.7 See also

- Kaumaram
- Six Abodes of Lord Muruga
- Skanda Purana

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