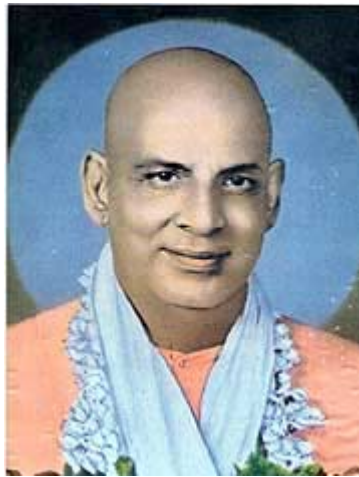


LORD SHANMUKHA AND HIS WORSHIP

By

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA



**Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society**



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE
So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda**

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Dedicated to

LORD SHANMUKHA

*The Consort of Valli, Deivayanai,
The Destroyer of all Asuric Forces,
and the Bestower of Divine Strength,
Wisdom, Peace, Bliss and Immortality*

And to

*All His Devotees and
Seekers in the Path of Truth.*

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The Advent of Lord Skanda or Karttikeya, the purpose of His incarnation as an Avatara and its significance should be of great importance and of immense value to seekers after Truth. Lord Skanda, also known as Shanmukha, is adored and worshipped with intense faith and devotion throughout South India and Sri Lanka. And naturally it will be of great interest to all His devotees, in particular, to know more about Him, the significance of His birth and His life and career as a victorious General.

Sri Swami Sivanandaji, the author of this book, graphically describes the above-mentioned subjects in his usual style,—inspiring and direct, instructive and illuminating, soul-elevating and at once impressive. It is needless to introduce him to the readers, who is so very well-known as a versatile genius in all the spiritual subjects and as an author of many an immortal and monumental work that breathes the spirit of ancient wisdom and of direct and intuitive realisation of the Supreme.

The book has been divided into two parts—Part One dealing with the main theme, and Part Two consisting of Appendices.

Part One has six sections. Section One deals with the introductory portion,—it acquaints the reader with the purpose and significance of the incarnation of Lord Shanmukha and His Worship, as also of the previous birth of the Asuras. The subject dealt with in Section Two is the Skanda Purana. It describes, though in brief, the Divine advent and the glorious deeds of Lord Skanda—the conditions that preceded and necessitated the Birth of the Lord, His auspicious Avatara, His Bala Lilas, His commanding of the Deva army against the Asuras and His glorious victory over them, ending with His marriage with Deivayanai and Valli. Section Three exclusively deals with the esoteric significance of the story, in its different aspects. Section Four gives an account of some of the prominent Bhakta-Saints of Skanda; and Section Five of a few of His most important temples at different places in South India and Sri Lanka. Three messages from Sri Swami Sivanandaji, written on the occasion of Skanda Shashthi in the years 1945, 46 and 47, and one message from Sri Swami Krishnananda in 1980 have been grouped together in Section Six.

Part Two consists of four Appendices, which would interest and benefit the readers a great deal. Appendix One consists of the Skandopanishad, the Karttikeya Stotra, Subrahmanya Mantra, Dhyana Sloka and Shanmukha Gayatri (all in Sanskrit Original and meaning in English); the Ashtottara-sata-namavalis of Lord Subrahmanya, Devasena (Deivayanai) and Valli (all in Sanskrit); the different Names of Lord Skanda and their Significances. Inspiring and soul-elevating songs, Kirtans and Dhvanis of Lord Shanmukha have been grouped under Appendix Two. Appendix Three describes in detail everything about *Kaavadi*; and Appendix Four is Bibliography.

In the introductory pages have been included two articles on Lord Skanda,—one from Sri Swami Chidanandaji and one from Sri Swami Krishnanandaji,—as also a hymn by Sri Swami Shanmukhanandaji, which add to the beauty and utility of the book.

Bhaktiratna Sri Swami Shanmukhanandaji, M.S. G.S., who helped the author in various ways in writing the first edition of the book by acquainting him with valuable narratives and interesting anecdotes, deserves special mention and appreciation.

We consider the book as a masterpiece production and that it ranks with the other prominent works of Sri Swami Sivanandaji, on religion, viz., “Lord Siva and His Worship,” “Lord Krishna, His Lilas and Teachings,” and “The Life and Teachings of Lord Jesus,” which have been well received and appreciated by the reading public.

Since the second Edition of the book went out of print many years back, there has been a persistent demand for it, which has necessitated the reprinting of the same. While reprinting the book, we have taken the opportunity to revise it thoroughly. We hope that this work too will find a place in every public library and individual household.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

THE NEED FOR SKANDA-SAKTI IN SPIRITUAL SADHANA

(Sri Swami Chidananda)

The Birth of Skanda

We have the nine-day worship of the Divine Mother, during the Navaratra. Even so the Skanda-Shashthi is the traditional six-day worship of Lord Skanda or Karttikeya, the spiritual offspring of Lord Siva. We may even say that He is Lord Siva Himself, the Power of Lord Siva personified.

This great Avatars of Karttikeya is of deep significance and of very special importance to us, who have dedicated ourselves to the spiritual ideal, who have, by the Grace of God, begun to feel that the real purpose of life is not to be attained by enjoyment of the perishable objects of this physical world, but by striving to achieve the realisation of the spiritual ideal, by the attainment of the Eternal, the Imperishable; for, the manifestation of the Lord as Skanda has been in the nature of a practical demonstration of the laws that operate upon the inward path of ascent unto divinity. Saints and sages are, as it were, a living commentary upon the great scriptures; even so the great Avatars, the Divine personalities of our Puranas, their life and Lilas form a demonstration of the laws that operate upon the spiritual realm, of truths pertaining to the inner life of Yoga, inner Sadhana and Sakshatkara. Different aspects of this inner life of Yoga and Sadhana are brought out and demonstrated by different manifestations of the Supreme Deity and their various Lilas. If their right significance is understood, it will be of immense practical help and guidance to the Jiva which is trying to attain the Supreme and to realise the Paramatman.

In the Skanda Avatara is brought out the fact of the eternal struggle between Avidya and Jnana, between the lower Asuric and the higher divine forces, that operate both upon the cosmic scale as well as within the individual Prakriti; and the resolution of this eternal struggle and its consummation in supreme triumph to the divine forces is brought out in the Skanda Lilas.

We are told that *Tejas* burst forth from the *Ajna Chakra* of Lord Siva, which assumed the form of Lord Skanda. Thus He is the Jnana Jyoti. A very significant fact is there that ultimately He was taken out of six lotuses by Goddess Parvati from the *Saravanappoigai*, the lake where reeds were growing. We know that the supreme spiritual experience or the Aparoksha Anubhuti is attained, in Yogic parlance, through Shat-Chakra-Bheda or by piercing the six plexus. It is the emerging out of the six lower lotuses that finds the Jiva ultimately in a state of perfect (Purna) Yoga or Wisdom in the Sahasrara Chakra. Thus, in Skanda we have the ultimate product of an emergence out of the six lotuses or Shat-Chakras and this we know to be Supreme Wisdom. Therefore, Lord Skanda is a mass of ultimate transcendental Supreme Knowledge that has to destroy nescience, Ajnana or darkness, represented upon the plane of manifest cosmos in the form of the Asuric hosts.

The Prerequisite to the Descent of Grace

The very first factor of significance which seekers have to realise is that the Grace of the Lord, which was instrumental in leading one party to victory, came out to support the Devas and it was the fitness of the party that dictated the descent of the Grace. Herein the first truth is revealed that if the aspirant in his struggle should become fit to approach the giver of Grace for the bestowal of Grace, he must first make himself of Daivi-Prakriti and possess Daivi-Sampat. The accessibility to this fountain-head of Grace from which we may draw support is conditional upon the nature of the one who approaches it. Because they were Devas, they could approach the Gracious Lord in order to ask for His Grace. We have to become *Adhikaris*, if we may approach the one who is to bestow grace upon us and who is to provide us with the necessary leadership and the strength to overcome the evil forces with which we are trying to battle. This is given out by all Acharyas, all great seers and Mahapurushas in the form of the Sadhana-Chatushtaya, the Yama-Niyama or the Sadachara, the acquisition of Daivi-Sampat. This is an indispensable prerequisite for every seeker who wishes to get the better of the lower self and set foot on the path of Yoga.

Guru is Skanda-Sakti

Upon this human plane, the Guru or the spiritual preceptor or guide, who is to help us and to lead us to victory in our battle with Avidya or our lower nature, is the counterpart of Lord Skanda. He is the personification of Skanda-Sakti. Skanda is the personification of the total Sadhana-Sakti or Yoga-Sakti in this world. It is through Yoga-Sakti that one can attain perfect victory over all the forces of darkness that comprise Ajnana or ignorance and attain the fullness of wisdom. The law which has been demonstrated by the Skanda Avatara is, in actual life, brought out by the representation of Skanda in the form of the Guru, by the representation of the Devas or the celestial party in the form of the aspirant who has purified himself and attained the Sadhana-Chatushtaya and thus has become an Adhikari in order to approach the Guru and try to get his Grace.

We have to consider the next stage in the unfoldment of Skanda Lila. The Devas did not at the very outset approach the Lord and say, "Lord, there is a battle to be fought between ourselves and the Asuras. In this battle we desire to have victory. Therefore, you should help us." First and foremost, they had recognised that there was a certain force to be opposed, and they had recognised that that force was something undivine and against their real nature, which should be overcome. In thus doing, they gave out two laws. One is that we have first to recognise the presence of the lower self and that we are distinct from it; and that the lower self is an obstacle within us, an undesirable

element within our nature. And we must align ourselves not with that force but with the divine forces. The second is the truth that mere recognition of this or acceptance of the fact that the lower self is undesirable and must be overcome is not enough; we must put this recognition into dynamic action. We must manfully set about trying to do this process of breaking down all these elements of the evil, lower nature with all our heart and all our might. God helps those who help themselves, is a well-known old adage. This is very true upon the spiritual path. Unless we demonstrate our sincerity and completely rid ourselves of the impurity, unspiritual and undivine, by means of practical effort and actual striving, we have not yet attained the fitness to ask for grace. We must exert; then we become deserving. Then we can desire to obtain the help of the higher powers. This is a law which the majority of seekers are prone to disregard because recognition and acceptance of this law is very uncomfortable and inconvenient. For, it implies that we have to strive and to make effort, and the lower nature will not easily sanction this, inasmuch as in the beginning of the spiritual practice, to a great extent, the personality of the seeker is under the habitual dominance of the lower nature, its old tendencies, old habits, inclinations, etc. There may be a desire or even sincerity; but it is all theoretical and the Tamoguna which is the prominent feature of the lower nature will not easily allow the aspirant to put forth right exertion. To bring out this law in a telling manner, we are told that the Devas again and again gave battle to the Asuras, not once but time and again; and it was after repeatedly being worsted in battle that they found that, in spite of their earnest and sincere practical efforts to overcome the evil forces, they were yet not crowned with victory. Then it is that the celestial hosts turned to the Supreme Lord and prayed for His Grace. And, it is only when these conditions are fulfilled that the Lord will hear this prayer and bestow His Grace.

The Initiation

The Sadhana-Sakti or the awakening impulse to the Jiva slumbering in the powerful sleep of nescience or ignorance or Ajnana is imparted by means of the *Diksha* (initiation) given by the Guru. By *Diksha* we do not necessarily mean the imparting of a particular Mantra secretly into the ear of the disciple or any actual Sakti-Sanchara Kriya or any outward act at all. It may merely be the Sat-Sankalpa of the Guru. It may be by a passing glance, a simple gaze, a touch or a single word, or a thought. The mysterious way in which this Sadhana-Sakti is made to enter into, indwell and work in the nature of the disciple, in the inwardness of the personality of the seeker, only the Guru knows and only the realised ones perceive.

The Meaning of Prayer

The entire process of the spiritual ascent is from start to finish one of earnest practice. There is no other road except *Abhyasa*. One may have the best feeling, the best heart, the most sublime Bhava, but unless and until every part of this is put into actual practice, there is no hope. *Abhyasa* is the keynote of the life of Sadhana. Without it, Sadhana will not go towards its fruition of *Anubhuti* or experience. Thus we have the celestials standing at the door of Mahadeva. They hymn Him, glorify Him and pray unto Him; and this is our next cue. It is the law of prayer that is now given to us as our sole guide upon the path. Prayer means, first and foremost, a perfect belief in a higher power. It means the desire and willingness to submit our Abhimana or ego at the feet of a higher power. Thus, the acquisition of Shraddha (interest) is now pointed out to us. The submission of our personal ego or Abhimana is next pointed out to us. Herein its natural corollary, the cultivation of

the supreme virtue of absolute humility, also is indicated. The fourth thing that prayer implies, as it has been given to us specifically in the unfoldment of the Skanda Lila, is that the ultimate purpose of this prayer was to be given a leader, whom the Devas were to follow. The seeker has to mark this. The prayer was not for power or ability to oneself. If we carefully reflect over this, we will find how this beautifully brings forth the underlying law of spiritual unfoldment with its ultimate connotation of the total eradication of the ego. The entire anatomy of the spiritual life can be summed up in this one phrase: the annihilation of the individual ego so that the universal ego-consciousness may be experienced. The Devas prayed not that they may get power to win the Asuras. There is the attitude of willing self-effacement, self-abnegation, a standing aside so that the fullest manifestation of the divine power may stand in front and take over the stand from them. They said: “We are nothing, give us a leader whom we shall willingly follow and obey and under whose lead this victory may be brought about.” This indicates the recognition of the non-doership of the individual self and the Supreme doership the one doer, the Supreme God. It indicates that the Sadhaka or the seeker is but a mere instrument; and it is the Lord Himself, the indweller in the individual, who takes over the Sadhana and actually does it. When the seeker begins to feel that even this Sadhana is not done by him, but is the Divine Sakti that works within him and enables the Sadhana to be worked out and which achieves the ultimate fulfilment of the Divine Will, then he starts on the real upward march and rapid ascent towards triumphant divinity.

Thus the second aspect of prayer unfolds itself before us. We completely allow the Divine to take charge of our personality. The seeker recedes into the background and there is a total resignation to the will of the Divine. “I am nothing; Thy will be done.” This is the formula that keeps tune to every beat of his heart, every pulsation in his body. The seeker becomes a transformed being.

The Final Victory

Skanda Shashthi is the joyous occasion for us to worship the Lord in His triumphant, all-conquering aspect, when He annihilates the last remnants of the Ajnana of the Jiva and signals the final, conclusive victory of the Divine over the undivine, of Light over darkness, of the ultimate Reality by experiencing which we transcend all that is evanescent, ephemeral, transitory and unreal. We find that He reveals to us, in His Lila, the truth embodied in the Upanishadic utterance: *Rite Jnananna Mukti*—Without Jnana, without the Transcendental Knowledge, there is no freedom, no ultimate salvation. This great declaration tells us beyond all doubt how it is the ultimate, complete eradication of the last traces of Ajnana or Maya that alone can bestow upon the Jiva the highest Kaivalya Moksha. This is brought out to us in a thrilling manner in the final episode of the Divine Skanda Lila wherein the Lord engages in battle and vanquishes the three great Asuras—Taraka, Simhamukha and Surapadma, representing Karma, Kama and Avidya, respectively.

After the fall of his brothers Taraka and Simhamukha, Surapadma himself comes to the battlefield. He tries all his devices and finds that none of these could stand the onslaught of the divine *Vel* (Spear) of Lord Skanda. Then he takes different forms and fights with the Lord, sometimes visible and sometimes invisible. But the Lord destroys all his illusory tricks and makes him stand bereft of his chariot, etc. Surapadma gives up the struggle and in the last assault rushes upon the Lord in his true form—simple ego. Once again, he is met by the divine Spear of Skanda

and there is the annihilation of Surapadma, and the Lord alone shines there in all His triumphant glory.

The *Vel* itself reveals yet another great law upon the higher rungs of Yoga. The *Vel* or Spear is a weapon that tapers into an absolute sharp point and vanishes into nothingness above it. It represents the absolute one-pointed concentration, the unitary Brahmakara Vritti. When the Brahmakara Vritti is held to the exclusion of all other Vrittis, the Jiva ultimately leaps the barrier between Savikalpa and Nirvikalpa and is merged in the higher state of Turiya, where the Atman alone shines resplendent, and there is no trace of Ajnana or Maya left over.

We have seen how the acceptance of Grace in the form of the purified mind or the Skanda-Sakti means the necessary surrender of our lower Abhimana at its feet. The battle is over; and victory is to the Divine. After that, the culminating event is the sacred alliance of the Lord with Valli. This, too, gives the clue to the true import of the scriptures when they refer to the ultimate nature of Absolute Oneness, Absolute Union of the Jivatman with the Paramatman. The seeker has completed the process of Yoga, and Satchidananda alone exists. It is all Light, Consciousness, Bliss.

We shall be greatly benefited if we reflect upon these truths demonstrated in the Skanda Avatara. May the Grace of the Lord Skanda be ever upon you all!

LORD SKANDA

(Sri Swami Krishnananda)

Skanda, the second son of Siva, and the younger brother of Ganesha, is also known as Kumara, Karttikeya, Shanmukha, Subrahmanya, and many other names. His banner is the cock and vehicle the peacock which stands clutching a serpent in its talons. His Saktis or inseparable powers are Valli and Devasena (Deivayanai) whom he assumed in the course of the great history describing his multiformed life of a series of exploits both in the celestial and temporal realms. The devotees of Skanda form a large part of the population especially of Southern India, and constitute one of the important sections of the religion of the country. The advent of Skanda was the background of the occasion when Siva burnt Manmatha with His third eye, a penalty he inflicted on Kama or the god of love for disturbing him in his meditation. The story goes that the sparks which flashed forth from the third eye of Siva rushed through space, which Vayu and Agni carried and dropped into the river Ganga. Ganga, being unable to contain the divine energy, shoved it on to her banks, upon a shrub of reeds known as *Sara*. There is thus a combination of the ether, air, fire, water and earth principles in the depositing of the *Tejas* or energy of Siva in the world. The cumulative force which combined the forms of the five elements impregnated with the divine power of Siva (Divya-Tejas) manifested itself as a sixfold divinity with six faces (Shanmukha), including both the unmanifest and manifest elements in a single being. This is the child of Siva, of mysterious birth, mysterious bringing up, under mysterious circumstances, for a mysterious purpose which the gods alone knew. The third eye represents the principle of intelligence and Skanda, thus, as a revelation through the third eye of Siva, is said to stand for an incarnation of Divine Knowledge.

The principal weapon of Skanda is a spear (*Vel*), pointed at its end and tall in stature. Devotees understand by it the need for one-pointedness of mind in slaying the demon of ignorance, which is expected to be sharp and sure in its aim. The gods, under the advice of Brahma, connived the birth of Skanda through the instrumentality of Siva and his consort Parvati. The Asuras,—Surapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka,—who wrought havoc everywhere in creation, could be destroyed only by the son of Siva manifested as a special divine Power. Skanda became the General of the celestial forces (Senani) and He is worshipped as the martial god of Hinduism. The day on which He slew the Asura is celebrated on the sixth day of the bright half of the month of Karttika (October-November) according to one tradition, and the month of Margasirsha (November-December) according to another.

The Skanda Purana is devoted to the glorification of Skanda and His sportful routing out of the Asuras. The great battle between the celestial forces led by Skanda and the Asuras is an epic by itself. Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava* is a famous Sanskrit poem on the birth of the war-god. The Tamil poem, 'Thiruppugazh', by the saint Arunagirinathar, is held in as much esteem by the devotees of Skanda as the Vedas in Sanskrit or the 'Divya-Prabandham' in Tamil Vaishnavism and the 'Tevaram' in Tamil Saivism. His 'Kandaranubhuti' and 'Kandaralankaram' are other renowned songs on the love and experience of God as Skanda. It may be safely said that the cults of Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, Ganesha, Surya and Skanda form the six great sections in the book of the religion of the Hindus. Some would like to add the Pasupata cult, which is a minor group of the worshippers of Siva in a particular form. The Mahabharata recounts the principal deeds of Skanda. The Kumara Tantra forms an important literature on the worship of Skanda. The Skanda Purana is a sacred book devoted to Skanda, and in its Tamil recension records the mighty deeds of the god.

HYMN TO LORD SHANMUKHA

(Sri Swami Shanmukhananda)

Hail Shanmukha! all hail unto Thee, the illustrious son of Lord Siva!
Six are the sparks of light from Siva's Trikuti flashed,
Six are Thy faces to remind the world of Thy Omnipresence,
Six are Thy attributes and functions as *Bhagavan* of all,
Six are the letters of Thy Mantra '*Saravanabhava*' for all,
Six are the Devis that nursed Thee from the Karttik Star,
Six are the days in the Vrata of Skanda Shashthi to glorify Thy Avatara!
Hail Shanmukha! Hail unto Thee! Thou art the Lord of the Saktis:
The Power of Will is Your *Ichha Sakti*,—Valli Devi by name;
The Power of Action is Your *Kriya Sakti*,—Deivayanai of fame;
And *Jnana Sakti*,—Your *Vel*, that bestows Knowledge Supreme.
To protect the good and punish the wicked on this plane
Thou hast descended from above, as Siva's glorious Son.
Thou art the indweller of the hearts of all creation
And Guha is Thy name, who dwells in the cave of every heart.
Many are the places wherein Thy Temples are ensconced,

And there Thy Divine Forms as Skanda and Subrahmanya are worshipped.
To punish the Asuras for their wicked deeds You came
And to save the Devas from their prolonged sufferings untold;
To remove the wails, sufferings and tribulations of the world,
Craving Thy mercy and protection men seek Thy Lotus Feet.
It is told that the Divine Sparks of Siva, Mother Ganga carried
To leave them in the Pool of *Saravana* at the behest of the Lord.
Unable to bear the scorching, fiery blaze of the Sparks,
Ganga hurried up to the pool *Saravana* and left them there.
Though desirous of having Thee, the glory and grace of Lord Siva,
Yet, unable to bear You in the glowing Sparks, she hurried to leave You there.
What then! Her wishes were fulfilled by the grace of Lord Siva,
And Skanda, His son, was born to bestow on one and all peace and bliss.
Praise be unto Thee, Lord Skanda! Thou art known as *Kaliyuga Varada*,
To safeguard righteousness and destroy Adharma in this land of Seers.
Many Thy forms; and many are Thy ways to bestow good upon man.
Perhaps in this Iron Age to fulfil Thy mission of protecting the Good
Thou hast come down to the 'Abode of Bliss' in the lofty Himalayas;
Son of *Siva*, to bestow *Ananda* on all, in name *Sivananda*,
Where on the slopes of the hills the holy Ganga rolls on,
There Thy abode with all Thy graces filled, the *Kutir Ananda*.
And to fight Ignorance and Worldliness of nature Asuric
Thou hast encamped with Your army of Devas in the wilderness.
And the army at Thy command fights daily with these Asuras dread.
Many a missile is sent by Thee across the vast country
To tear asunder the Asuric nature, forces undivine and Maya's veil.
Messages, letters and books fly across, like arrows swift,
To annihilate ignorance and comfort the suffering Jivas!!
Thy words of inspiration and blessings reach the many;
They elevate the depressed, and infuse zeal into all seekers of Truth.
Bestowing the highest peace and bliss to all earnest aspirants,
Thou despatcheth the mighty '*Vel*' in the form of thy Graces.
Glory to Thee! Skanda, in form *Sivananda*, Thy ways are mysterious;
But Faith and Love ever reveal to man the hidden glories of God!!

SAINT ARUNAGIRI'S KANDAR ANUBHUTI

Saint Arunagiri is of an extraordinary type. To him Lord Skanda Himself appeared as Guru and gave *Upadesa*, a Japa-Mala, etc. and the Saint had, by the unusual grace of the Lord, Realisation or God-experience, as a result of which he gave out many works of exquisite Tamil verses.

Saint Arunagirinathar has sung 16,000 poems called *Tiruppugazh*, 'Glory of the Lord', though only about 1,300 of them are available now. This is his main, renowned work. His other works are *Tiruvaguppu*, *Kandar Anatati*, *Kandar Alankaaram*, *Mayil Viruttam*, *Vel Viruttam*, *Seval Viruttam*, *Tiru Ezhu Kuttrirukkai*, and *Kandar Anubhuti*.

Kandaranubhuti is a small work of 51 verses. Though, from the point of view of the number and size of the verses, *Kandaranubhuti* is a small treatise, yet it is the most deep and direct. It is a powerful work and gives the direct Divine Experience of the Saint, as also intimate clues for Sadhakas to attain that experience. It is a work on *Anubhuti* or God-attainment and is the crowning glory of all the works of the Saint. It is regarded as a Mantra-Sastra, without an equal to it, and is held in high esteem by all.

The term *Kandaranubhuti* is derived from *Kandar* and *Anubhuti*. 'Kandar' in Tamil is 'Skanda' in Sanskrit. 'Anubhuti' means 'becoming one with', or 'Experience.' Hence *Kandaranubhuti* means to become one with Skanda and denotes God-Experience. This is a work sung by Saint Arunagirinathar as a result of his God-Experience or 'Kandar Anubhuti', which also directs others to that Experience. It is the experience of the Saint given expression to in such powerful words that, when it is repeated by others, it is capable of bringing the same experience in them, in due course. Such is the glory of the work.

Kandaranubhuti is considered by many to be a collection of verses independently sung by the Saint at different times in accordance with the prevailing kind of religious and spiritual exaltation of his mind. Hence we may not see much continuity in the ideas conveyed by the verses, i.e., the ideas expressed in the verses appear to be independent and not closely connected. But a deeper and intimate study of the work would reveal an esoteric meaning in the work—an inner link of ideas from verse to verse—which lays out a method of Sadhana to a serious seeker after Truth, taking him from the earliest stages of Sadhana, through different levels of experience, hinting at the difficulties that he has to face and the methods of overcoming them, and finally granting him *Anubhuti* or God-Experience. It is a marvellous piece of work, a masterpiece of Saint Arunagiri.

This is considered as a Mantra-Sastra,—a treatise consisting of *Mantras* or mystic formulae,—and a daily recitation of *Kandaranubhuti* is indeed capable of bestowing whatever one wishes, in the manner one wishes. It is a Mantra-Sastra because it contains several Mantras in it; 'Velum Mayilum Thunai', in verse 1; 'Kumaraya Namah', in verse 36; 'Aham Brahma Asmi', in verse 37. The *Vel* is a mystic, Divine Weapon and is referred to by the Saint as *Mantra-Vel* in one of his *Tiruppugazh* songs. Out of the 51 verses, in 25 verses there is invocation to the *Vel* directly, and in 8 to the Peacock. And in addition, each verse is replete with the different Names of the Lord, such as Kanda, Muruga, Guha, Shanmukha, Velayudha, Kumara, the peacock-rider, the consort of Valli,

etc., from the beginning to the end. For all these reasons, the work *Kandaranubhuti* is considered as a Mantra-Sastra.

We may regard “Kandaranubhuti” as the crowning glory of Saint Arunagiri’s works, though each other work of his has a purpose, speciality and charm of its own. All the works of Arunagiri put together may be regarded as the ‘Arunagiri Veda’, of which *Kandaranubhuti* would form the ‘Anubhuti-Upanishad’. It is the culminating and the wisdom-portion of his works. The 51 verses of *Kandaranubhuti* are verily 51 Mantras, like the Upanishadic Mantras,—so concise, so pithy, and so brevity-filled, with many secret clues to higher meditation and attainment. We can say without the least hesitation that the treatise fulfils the purpose of an Upanishad, remarkably. Truly it is a Mantra-Sastra!

We can pay no better tribute to Saint Arunagiri and his unique work “Kandaranubhuti” than what Saint Thayumanava Swamigal has said: “When shall be that blessed day, when I shall get the grace of my (spiritual) father (saint Arunagiri) who, obtaining *Anubhuti* (or Direct Spiritual Experience) of Lord Skanda, has sung (the work) *Kandaranubhuti!*”

It is, therefore, beyond doubt and dispute that Arunagiri attained God-Experience first and then gave the work *Kandaranubhuti* to the world. Such God-experienced saints are the Sivajnana Yogis or Jivanmuktas, and they are characterised by extreme compassion to people. They are in constant union with God and their actions are verily God’s actions. God speaks and does superhuman things through them for the benefit of the world. *Kandaranubhuti* may, therefore, be said to be a divine gift to the seeker-world.

May we sing *Kandaranubhuti* daily! May we recite it daily! May we take to a deeper study of it and contemplate on the truths conveyed therein! May we all attain that blessed Divine-Experience which Saint Arunagirinathar had! May the Saint bless us all! May the blessings of Satguru Swami Sivananda and the Almighty Lord Skanda be upon us all!

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SECTION ONE

INTRODUCTORY

1. Invocatory

Prostrations and salutations to Lord Subrahmanya, the Supreme Being,—who is the ruler of this Universe, who is the Indweller of our hearts, who is the second son of Lord Siva, who is the beloved of Valli and Deivayani, who bestows boons quickly on His devotees and who is an embodiment of Power, Wisdom, Love and Bliss.

Lord Subrahmanya is an Avatara of Lord Siva. All incarnations are manifestations of the One Supreme Lord. Lord Subrahmanya and Lord Krishna are one. Lord Krishna says in the Gita, “*Senaninam Aharn Skandah*,”—“Of the Generals, I am Skanda.” The Lord manifests Himself from time to time in various names and forms for establishing Dharma and punishing the wicked.

Lord Subrahmanya is a ray born of the Chaitanya of Lord Siva. He is the energy of Lord Siva. Valli and Deivayani are His two Divine consorts. They represent the *Iccha Shakti* and the *Kriya Shakti* of the Lord. He is a *Pratyaksha Devata* in this Kali Yuga, like Hanuman. He bestows on His devotees material and spiritual prosperity and success in all their undertakings, even at the slightest devotion shown to Him. He is worshipped much in South India. Guha, Muruga, Kumaresa, Karttikeya, Shanmukha (he who has six faces), Subrahmanya, Skanda, Velayudha (he who wears the Spear), Saravanabhava are synonymous terms.

In the picture, Lord-Subrahmanya holds the *Vel* or Spear in His hand, just as Lord Siva holds the Trident or Trisula. The *Vel* is an emblem of Power, and indicates that He is the ruler of this Universe. Devotees of Lord Subrahmanya do obeisance to the *Vel*. His vehicle or *Vahana* is the peacock: this is by way of representation that he has entirely conquered pride, egoism, vanity. There is a cobra under His Feet: this is to indicate that He is absolutely fearless, immortal and wise. Valli is on His one side, Deivayanai is on the other. Sometimes He stands alone with the *Vel*. He is then called by the name of Dandapani. This represents His *Nirguna* aspect which is free from *Maya*.

The six heads represent the six rays or the six attributes viz. *Jnana* (wisdom), *Vairagya* (dispassion), *Bala* (strength), *Kirti* (fame), *Sree* (wealth) and *Aishvarya* (divine powers). They indicate that He is the source for the four Vedas, Vedangas and the six schools of philosophy; that He has controlled the five *Jnana* Indriyas and the mind. They denote that He is the *Virat Purusha* with countless heads. They signify that His head is turned everywhere (*Visvatomukha*): He is all-pervading. They indicate that He is omnipotent and that He can multiply and assume forms at His will.

There are big temples dedicated to Lord Subrahmanya in Tiruchendur (in Tinnevely District), in Udipi, Palani Hills, Tiruttani, Kathirgamam (Sri Lanka) and in Tirupparankunram. If one goes to Kathirgamam with faith, devotion and piety and stays in the temple for two or three days, Lord Subrahmanya gives His *Vibhuti* to the devotee in the shape of instructions. The devotee gets mystical experiences. A big festival is held in this temple every year on Skanda Shashthi.

Mountains of camphor are burnt on this occasion. Thousands of people gather there for the occasion.

During Skanda Shashthi, the day on which Lord Subrahmanya killed the demon Surapadma, grand festivals are held with great pomp and grandeur at various places in South India. Devotees do worship, Bhajan and Kirtan on this day on an almost extravagant scale. Thousands are fed sumptuously. Many incurable diseases are cured, if one visits Palani and worships the Lord there. In South India Lord Subrahmanya's Lilas are dramatised and performed in open air theatres.

The famous poet Nakeerar has sung '*Thirumurugattrupadai*' in praise of Skanda. He who studies this famous book daily with devotion, gets success in life, peace and prosperity. *Thiruppugazh* is a famous book in Tamil which contains the inspiring songs of Arunagirinathar in praise of Lord Subrahmanya. Arunagirinathar had direct Darshan of the Lord. Kavadihindu songs also are in praise of Lord Subrahmanya.

O Lord Subrahmanya! O All-merciful Lord! We have neither faith nor devotion. We do not know how to worship Thee in the proper manner, or to meditate upon Thee. We are Thy children who have lost the way, forgotten the goal and Thy Name. Is it not Thy duty, O Compassionate Father, to take back these lost children under Thy shelter, to caress and protect them, and to shower Thy grace and benedictions on them?

O Mother Valli! Will you not intercede for us with Thy Lord? Mother's Love for Her children is mightier than any other emotion in this world. Though we have become worthless and undutiful children, O beloved Mother, pardon us. Make us dutiful and faithful. We are Thine from this very second. Always Thine. All is Thine. It is the Mother's duty to correct, educate, rectify and mould Her reckless children when they stray away from the right path. Remove the gulf that separates, or the veil that hides, us from Thee. Bless us. Enlighten us. Take us back to Thy Lotus Feet. We have nothing more to Say. This is our fervent prayer to Thee and Thy Lord, our beloved and eternal parents.

2. The Worship of Lord Skanda

The worship of Lord Shanmukha is very common in South India. Almost every town in the South has its temple dedicated to Lord Shanmukha. The Tamils have named Shanmukha as Murugan. Just as the God of Winds is Vayu, the God of Waters Varuna, the Tamil term for the Lord of Nature is Murugan.

The term Murugan, in Tamil, denotes the Deity possessed of undecaying beauty, everlasting youth and Godliness. Any Deity who is endowed with the above attributes is truly Murugan. Hence the worship of Skanda or Murugan does not pertain to any sect or creed. Perhaps it is the outcome of an inherent desire of man to express his gratitude for an unknown and hidden Power, which bestows upon him every good and removes all his sufferings. Worship of Lord Murugan is tantamount to the worship of Nature. As Nature abounds with soul-stirring and inspiring landscapes and is the source and support of all living beings on earth, the ancients have thought it right to glorify Nature.

To lead a natural life is to live with Nature. This is the life in consonance with the Divine Will. Control of the senses, anger and lust is the way to achieve the higher life. And the most important form of worship that a human being can offer unto the Lord is by not hurting others either by thought or word or deed. Only then life in nature becomes smooth and happy. It is this kind of worship and life that the Skanda Purana teaches us through the worship of the Saguna form of Lord Skanda. Indeed it is the counsel of Christ: “Treat thy neighbour as thy own Self” and “Do unto others as thou wishest to be done by.” And the Essence of all religions is only to abstain from inflicting injury on anyone,—*Ahimsa Paramodharmah*.

Hence, whenever we worship Lord Murugan, we should have the *Bhava* ‘I pray unto Him, who is the All-Pervading Beautiful One, the Indweller of all, in the Form of Lord Subrahmanya or Murugan.’ This Saguna form of the Lord is only to give a hold and grasp for the mind to understand the Immortal, the Omnipotent and the Omniscient attributes of the Almighty, who is at once Infinite and the Indweller of every heart.

As in the worship of other Deities, in the *Saguna* worship of Lord Skanda also, there are some *Vratas*, or observances. There was once a king, Muchukunda by name. He was a staunch Saivite. He approached Sage Vasishtha to advise him on the importance and methods of observing some Vrata by which he could gain personal success, peace and prosperity. Vasishtha indicated the *Vratas* of Lord Skanda and detailed their significances.

One of them is the Vrata observed on every Friday. By observing this Vrata of Friday for 3 years, Bhagiratha overcame his enemy Gora. On Friday, after a clean bath, one should do Puja and Archana for the Lord with extreme devotion. He who does this is bound to achieve success in all his undertakings.

Another Vrata is the Karttikai Vrata. On every Karttikai (3rd constellation of the 27 stars) day, this Vrata is to be observed with faith and devotion, and with external purification by a bath, before the Puja, etc. This Vrata was observed by Narada Rishi as per the advice of Lord Ganesa. After a period of 12 years, Narada gained his ambition, viz., the supreme position among the great Sapta Rishis.

The most important of all the *Vratas* of Lord Shanmukha is the Skanda Shashthi Vrata. It is to be commenced on the Prathama Tithi (the day immediately following Dipavali) of the Sukla Paksha (bright fortnight) in the month of *Aippasi* (October-November). A complete fast should be observed and the devotee should engage himself solely in the Puja of the Lord, in reading and learning of the glories of Lord Skanda, Bhajan, meditation, etc. If fasting for six days continuously is likely to prove too much of a strain, he may have one meal per day and fast completely on the last day, i.e. the Shashthi Day. This is the day to commemorate the victory of Lord Shanmukha over the Asura king, Surapadman. Persons who observe this Vrata achieve success in all their undertakings and in the end attain Liberation.

Having thus heard all about the *Vratas* and their importance, king Muchukunda took leave of Sage Vasishtha. With faith and sincerity he observed them and had Darshan of Lord Subrahmanya who blessed His devotee with peace, plenty, prosperity and *Kaivalya Moksha*.

May Lord Subrahmanya grant you strength to observe such Vratas and may you all be the fortunate recipients of His Blessings!

3. The Previous Birth of the Asuras

The sages who heard the Lilas of Lord Skanda asked Suta Rishi how Surapadma happened to be the *Vahana* or vehicle of the Lord and killed in the battlefield by the Lord. In reply to this, the Rishi gave a brief account of the lives of the Asuras prior to their births as Surapadma, Simhamukha, Tarakasura and Ajamukhi.

Once the Devas assembled at Kailasa to witness the Tandava dance of Lord Siva. After leaving their Vahanas at the foot of the hill, Brahma, Vishnu and Lord Kartik went up to have the Tandava Darshan. The Swan, the Garuda, the Peacock and the Cock were standing at the foot of the hill.

While all the Devas were absent, four of the Bhutaganas of Lord Siva, (Sura, Padma, Simhamukha and Taraka) created a fight amongst the Peacock and the Cock on the one side, and the Swan and the Garuda on the other side. They themselves joined the former and inflicted severe injuries on the Swan and the Garuda.

Vishnu and Brahma complained to Lord Skanda. Lord Skanda cursed the Bhutaganas to be born in the dynasty of the Asuras and torture the Devas and to be themselves finally destroyed by His *Vel* as punishment for their actions. Thus Surapadma and others took their births in the Asura dynasty and came to be known as Surapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka.

And these Ganas petitioned to the Lord to grant them their request of becoming Vahanas,—the Cock and the Peacock for Him, the Lion for the Devi and the Elephant for Sashta. These boons were granted. In this way, Surapadma became the Vahana and Flag-cock of Lord Skanda. Simhamukha, after his death, became the Vahana of Kali Devi. Tarakasura, as an elephant, served Hari-Hara-Putra as his Vahana.

* * *

Another story is told in the Purana about the previous life of the Asuras. Before he was included in the Bhutaganas of Lord Siva, the Asura, Surapadma had been the just king Prabhakara, ruling over a big kingdom in the island of Sakas. On hearing from Sage Agastiyar about the significance of being a Vahana to Lord Karttikeya in the form of a Cock and a Peacock, he did rigorous Tapas and was granted the privilege of being amongst the Bhutaganas of Lord Siva.

Further, regarding Tarakasura and Simhamukha, it is related that they fervently desired to become the Vahanas of Sri Devi and Maha Shashta, as Lion and Elephant. On learning from Sage Trinabindu how to achieve this, they did Tapas and were made to serve Lord Siva as Bhutaganas along with Sura and Padma.

Once Asurendra sought Lord Siva's protection against His Bhutaganas under Sura, Padma, Simhamukha and Tarakasura, who in a battle with the Asuras crushed them and inflicted a severe

defeat on the Asura dynasty. By the curse of Lord Siva, they were born as Asuras known by the name of Surapadma, Simhamukha and Tarakasura, and, at their request, they were made by Lord Karttikeya the Vahanas of their respective Devas, at the end of their fight with the Lord.

Ajamukhi, the sister of the Asura king Surapadma was, in her previous birth, Chitrarekha. Her husband was Pundarikasarma. Chitrarekha was possessed of an extremely lustful nature and she led a life of sheer debauchery, in spite of the presence of her husband. Still the Brahmin, Pundarikasarma, loved her much. It so happened that once sage Durvasa chanced to come to the house of this Brahmin.

Out of extreme lust she hugged the sage. Rendered furious by her wantonness, the sage turned his wrath in full on her. Unable to withstand the fury of the sage, Chitrarekha went to the street and hid herself amidst a herd of sheep. She was, however, found out by the sage; and one of his disciples tied her to the branches of a banyan tree. The sage cursed her to be born in the Asura dynasty with the face of a goat. And through her lustful cravings, the sage told her, she would have two sons. These sons were Vilvalan and Vatapai.

And Maya, having the same Kasyapa Rishi as her husband in her previous birth, had many sons who were killed and destroyed by the Devas. To avenge the defeat of her sons, Maya avowed to destroy the Devas by her sons born of the same sage in another birth. Her wishes were gratified.

4. Sri Karttikeya and Tarakasura According to Skanda Maha Purana—Mahesvar Khanda

After Bali, Kal Khanja, Maharoudra, Kalakeya, Nivata Kavacha, etc., were born as enemies to Indra. Tarakasura, son of Namuchi, did severe Tapasya or penance. Brahma was pleased. Tarakasura wanted to be *Ajar*, *Amar* and *Ajeya* (imperishable, immortal and invincible). Brahma gave him the boon of *Ajayatvam* (living invincible or unconquerable). He attacked and conquered the Devas (the gods) again and again.

The gods approached Vishnu. Vishnu asked them to find out some means to get Siva married, who was then in Samadhi; Sati had burnt her body in Daksha's Yajna and was born by then as daughter to Himavan, the Mountain-King, Parvati by name.

The gods approached Himavan and persuaded him to get his daughter Parvati married to Siva and thus serve the purpose of the Devas, who were oppressed by Tarakasura. Since none but one born of Siva alone could kill Tarakasura, Himavan took his eight-year old daughter Parvati to Siva. He prayed to Siva for permission to come to Him daily for 'Worship'. Siva granted this boon but desired Himavan not to bring Parvati with him any more. Parvati protested and reminded Him of His divine nature and entreated Him to let her continue her worship to Him. Pleased with her arguments and reasoning, Siva allowed her to do so.

After sometime, Parvati slowly got fixed up in her Tapasya on Siva. In the meanwhile, 'Cupid' (Kamadeva) as desired by the gods, approached Siva to distract Him from His Samadhi. Kamadeva was burnt to ashes in the attempt; Siva opened His third eye and Kamadeva was burnt by

INTRODUCTORY

the Rays emerging from it. At that time Parvati was there to worship Him as usual; and the Devas also approached Siva.

The gods received their desired boon. Kamadeva's wife, Rati, also performed severe Tapasya to get back Kamadeva, and Siva was pleased to restore Kamadeva to his original position but as *Ananga* (unembodied or without a body). Rati was taken away by Shambara, a demon, and she was there with Shambara, as Mayavati. According to Skanda Purana, Parvati did Tapasya, for Rati's sake, and got the desired boon from Siva. Siva was again in deep Samadhi, while by his side, Parvati, too, was performing her severe Tapas.

Again the gods petitioned Siva. And Siva, satisfied with Parvati's intense devotion to Him, in the guise of a *Vatu* (a young Brahmachari) gave her the desired boon and, as desired by the Devas, on Gandhamadan, a mountain in Kailasa, Siva's rays came forth as Pralayagni (the all-devouring fire). The whole of the Universe was on the point of being burnt and the Devas, including Brahma, were perturbed. As desired by the Devas, Agni, the Fire-god, in disguise stole into the presence of Siva unseen by Nandi at the main door and disturbed His privacy. Agni as Pani-Patra or Karapatri begged for alms.

Rudra was enraged and rushed forth to destroy him with His trident but was held back by Parvati. While Parvati came out with Bhiksha, Agni appeared in his own form. Girija got enraged and cursed him and made him Sarvabhakshi (all-devouring) and declared that all of them would reap the consequences of this evil plot.

Agni narrated all this to the Devas. To their great astonishment, all the Devas including Indra were contacted, through Agni, and all became *Sagarbhas* (pregnant) with excruciating pain. They approached Vishnu for relief. Vishnu could only direct them to Siva. The Devas, including Brahma and Vishnu, approached Siva and prayed to Him. Siva advised them to vomit the *Retas* (the rays) they were suffering from. They all vomited, and the rays took the form of a mountain of shining gold. They were followed by Agni.

Siva desired Agni to throw the 'rays' into the '*Yonis*' (the womb) of all ladies during their monthly course. Agni, the Fire-god, was burning with full rays, at the Ganga bank, early morning in Brahmamuhurta, when all the Rishipatnis were there for their morning bath (Pratah Snamam) in the month of Karttika. They were shivering with cold and, in order to warm themselves, approached Agni, the Fire, in spite of Arundhati's warning to them. As soon as the Rishipatnis including Krittika reached the proximity of the fire, they were all 'contacted'.

The said *Retas* (rays) of Siva entered every pore of their bodies. Agni was released. These Rishipatnis in turn were cursed by their husbands, the Rishis. The Krittikas were changed into birds (Khecharas); and the Rishipatnis, being ashamed of themselves and very sorry for their conduct (*Vyabhichara*), vomited the *Retas* (rays) on the Himalayas. All these rays in turn were thrown into the Ganga by the 'Kichakas', and there on the Ganga bank, out of these rays appeared the 'six-mouthed' or six-headed Shanmukha as (i) Karttikeya, (ii) Gangeya, (iii) Shaka, (iv) Vishakha, (v) Atibala and (vi) Mahabala.

The gods were overjoyed to hear of Shanmukha's birth through Ganga. Parvati was taken unawares. She became *Prasruta-stani*, a mother with milk pouring from her breasts. Immediately Narada came and informed them of Shanmukha having been born on the Ganga bank. Parvati with Siva hastened to the Ganga bank followed and surrounded by all the Devas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Siddhas, etc. They all prayed to Karttikeya, the child, the Kumara shining gloriously shedding divine rays of bliss. Parvati took 'Kumara', the child, in her lap and fed him at her flowing breasts. Karttikeya in Siva's lap began to play with the snakes round his neck and specially oppressed Vasuki with his many playful tiny hands! Thereafter, as desired by Siva, the gods, led by Brahma, installed Karttikeya as 'Senapati' and gave him the power to lead the unconquerable 'Sena' (army); also gave Sena, the most beautiful daughter of Mrityu, the Death-god, as his consort. With Sena as his consort, Karttikeya killed in battle Tarakasura, as desired by the gods.

SECTION TWO

SKANDA VIJAYAM

1. Preliminary

The Puranas are eighteen in number. They are the Brahma Purana, Padma Purana, Vishnu Purana, Siva Purana, Bhagavata Purana, Bhavishya Purana, Agni Purana, Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Linga Purana, Varaha Purana, Skanda Purana, Vamana Purana, Matsya Purana, Kurma Purana, Garuda Purana and Brahmada Purana. Of these, the Skanda Purana is the biggest. The teachings of the Vedas and the Upanishads are beyond the grasp of the average intellect. Sri Vyasa Bhagavan who codified the Vedas has therefore given the truths of the Vedas in a homely style in the Puranas for the easy understanding of the common man. The Puranas are like the magnifying glasses which reveal the subtle truths in a graspable manner, and they appeal easily to the sentiments of man.

The Skanda Purana deals with the Avatara and Lilas of Lord Skanda, the spiritual son of Lord Siva. Two Skanda Puranas are available—one divided into Khandas, and the other divided into Samhitas. The former gives only a brief account of Lord Skanda's Avatara and the destruction of Tarakasura at His hands. The latter, however, contains a detailed account of the divine advent and the glorious deeds of Lord Skanda—the need for the Lord's advent, His auspicious Avatara, His Bala Lilas, the commanding of the Deva army against the Asuras and their destruction, His marriage with Valli and Deivayanai, etc. There is a work called *Kanda Puranam* in Tamil, composed by Saint Kachiyappa Sivachariar, in verses, based on the Samhita-divided Skanda Purana and under the orders of Lord Shanmukha Who also gave the first line for the work.

The advent of the Lord was for the purpose of punishing the wicked and protecting the good. The great Asura Surapadma was tyrannising the Devas. He was defeated in battle by the Lord and the Devas were released from his control. This happened on the eve of the sixth day after Dipavali, which is the day of Skanda Shashthi. This day is celebrated in a grand manner in all temples of Lord Skanda. To devotees and spiritual seekers, the period of six days of Skanda Shashthi is an occasion for observance of strict Vratas, performance of grand worships and communion with the Lord in the Self within. Glory to Lord Skanda, the bestower of Divine Wisdom.

2. Daksha Yajna

Brahma had a son by name Daksha. On hearing from his father about the immense benefits of doing Tapas, Daksha went to the mountains and did rigorous Tapas on Lord Siva. Much pleased with his penance, Lord Siva granted him many boons. By these, Daksha became the king of the Devas and the three worlds. Also, he was the most fortunate recipient of another boon, viz., that Sri Parvati herself was to be his daughter.

In one of the discussions between Lord Siva and Parvati, the latter asserted herself very much and gave herself airs of too much self-importance. As a corrective to this bumptiousness, she was ordained to take a human birth and return later on to Mount Kailasa. Parvati Devi came down to earth and was lying as a child in a tank. While wandering in the forest, king Daksha saw this child in the lotus pond, took her home and brought her up as his own daughter. She was known as Dakshayani and, as the years grew, she cultivated extreme devotion for Lord Siva; and expressed her resolve to marry only Lord Siva. Daksha was highly pleased.

Lord Siva in the guise of a hunter met Dakshayani alone, and assured her that He would marry her very soon. On hearing the news, the girl's parents made arrangements to celebrate the marriage in a grand and befitting manner. But Lord Siva, instead of undergoing the prescribed ceremonies of marriage, entered the wedding hall abruptly and carried away Dakshayani in the presence of Daksha and other Devas who had assembled there to grace the occasion. This action of Lord Siva infuriated Daksha, and, forgetting all that He had done for him and the greatness of the Lord, Daksha began abusing Siva and belittling His Lilas.

Daksha had 27 daughters whom he had given in marriage to Chandra (moon-god). Chandra, instead of loving all the 27 wives equally, developed an intense partiality towards Rohini. Resentful of this action of Chandra, the other wives went and complained to their father, Daksha, about the partiality of Chandra. Daksha, on hearing this report from his dear daughters, cursed Chandra to be deprived of his *Kalas* (brightness). Much grieved and depressed at heart, Chandra at last made his way to Lord Siva and prayed to be saved from the curse of Daksha. And the Lord, out of compassion, retrieved him partially from the curse and saved him by wearing him on His own forehead. Hence we find changes in the phases of the Moon—gradual decrease of brightness during *Krishna Paksha* or the dark fortnight, and gradual increase during the *Sukla Paksha* or the bright fortnight. This action of Lord Siva further infuriated Daksha.

Lord Brahma had arranged for the performance of a Yajna and, as usual, to offer the sacraments of the Yajna to Lord Siva, the Lord of all Yajnas. Invitations were sent to all Devas as well as to Daksha. The whole host of Devas had assembled in the Yajna hall. Lord Siva had sent Nandi to attend the function and represent Him during the Yajna. Daksha, who also attended the Yajna, was filled with such envy and pride that he not only condemned Brahma for giving the sacrament to Siva but also went to the extent of blaspheming Lord Siva and treating His representative, Nandi, in the most contemptuous manner.

None of the Devas witnessing this behaviour of Daksha had the courage to protest. But Nandi was touched to the quick. Enraged much at the words of Daksha, Nandi cursed him to suffer in various ways and die a violent death, and to have a goat's head in his next birth. He also berated

the Devas for their indifference, if not cowardliness, in not admonishing Daksha for his blasphemy and cursed them to undergo torture and persecution at the hands of the Asuras Surapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka. With this Nandi left the hall in a rage.

After the departure of Nandi, the great sage and seer, Dadheechi Maharshi, approached Daksha and advised him not to act in that manner towards Lord Siva. He brought home to Daksha the various acts of compassion of Lord Siva and His Lilas. The sage entreated him to be more devotional to Him and leave off such haughtiness of spirit. But all in vain. At last Daksha decided to perform a Yajna in which he would neither invite Lord Siva nor offer the sacrament to Him.

At Kankhal (in Hardwar), on the banks of the Ganga, arrangements were made for the grand Yajna of Daksha. All the Devas were invited. Large scale arrangements had been made for receiving the visitors to the Yajnasala. Lord Siva alone was left uninvited. Dakshayani, who was at the time with Lord Siva at Kailasa, heard the news of the Grand Yajna of her father. Against the wishes of her Lord, Dakshayani, tempted by her keen and natural desire to attend the great function, hurried up to Kankhal, where the Yajna was in progress.

There was none to welcome her at her father's residence. And worse still, she was openly insulted by her father and his party. News of this ill-treatment meted out to Dakshayani reached Lord Siva. He summoned god Veerabhadra and ordered him to make a clean sweep of the Yajna and the participants thereof. Veerabhadra rushed to the spot in great fury and dashed to pieces all the grand arrangements made for the Yajna; and almost all the participants fell a prey to his unbounded ire. Those who begged pardon of him were let off. While this work of destruction was going on, Lord Siva appeared before the Devas. At the request of Dakshayani, Siva brought back all the dead to life. After sometime, on the advice of Lord Brahma, his father, Daksha went to Varanasi to do Tapas for the grace of Lord Siva. Lord Siva appeared before Daksha and made him one of the leaders of His Bhuta Ganas.

3. The Curse of Nandi

Akhirasena, the king of the Asuras, had a daughter Surasai by name. To avenge the defeat of the Asuras at the hands of the Devas, Sukracharya, the Asura Guru, taught Surasai all the Arts of Maya. Surasai became an adept in those Arts, and was herself aptly called Maya. To bring back the lost glory of the Asuras, Maya determined to beget children through a great sage, so that the descendants could be more powerful than the Devas. With this in view, she approached the place where Kasyapa Rishi was doing rigorous Tapas.

By her magic spells she created a beautiful garden in the forest; and there she was, dancing and enjoying herself as part of the beauty of Nature. Disturbed by this interference, Kasyapa woke up from his meditation and saw a beautiful lady before him. By the secret powers of Maya, the Rishi fell victim to her charms and easily yielded to her proposals. Both the Rishi and Maya spent happy days together, roaming about gaily in the forest. Maya bore three sons and a daughter to the Rishi. The first son was Surapadma, the second Simhamukha and the third Tarakasura. The daughter's name was Ajamukhi. Of the sons, Simhamukha had a lion's face and Tarakasura an elephant's; and Ajamukhi had the face of a goat. Along with them there arose a huge army of Asuras to help these leaders in their oncoming fight with the Devas.

Surapadma and his brothers, while they were yet young, requested their father and mother to prepare them for a life of glory and victory. Kasyapa Rishi told them to lead a virtuous life and do rigorous Tapas with intense devotion to the Lord. He cited the story of Markandeya to show how the power of his devotion to Lord Siva had protected him even from the grip of Lord Yama.

But Maya, mindful of her mission, was not satisfied with this advice to her sons. She entreated her sons to do rigorous Tapas on Lord Siva and to obtain boons by which they could have suzerainty over the Devas and live happily and gloriously.

After some time, Kasyapa realised his folly in having allowed himself to become a victim to the wiles of Maya and left them all and went his own way. As advised by their mother, Surapadma and his brothers proceeded north to perform intense Tapas. After making every arrangement carefully for the performance of their penance, they commenced their Tapas. Years passed. They obtained no results. Hence Surapadma and his brothers doubled their austerities, cut off every limb of their body and threw them one after another as an offering into the sacrificial fire before them. Even then Lord Siva did not appear. Finally Surapadma offered himself in the fire and died. The other brothers were also preparing themselves for a similar sacrifice when Lord Siva appeared before them, brought Surapadma back to life and granted a number of boons prayed for by them.

Having thus achieved their aims, they came back triumphantly to their mother who gladly welcomed them home. Maya sent them to Sukracharya, the Asura Guru, for further advice and guidance. Sukracharya gave them detailed instruction for leading an extremely sensuous life of pomp and glory. He addressed them thus: “When people say ‘everything is done by the one Supreme Being and He dwells everywhere,’ they are telling a stupendous lie. The Lord has created all other creatures and plants simply for man’s enjoyment. Might is Right. No one will derive any pleasure by acting upto the high-sounding precepts like ‘Do always good, avoid evil things.’

“The so-called Lord’s Lilas are just like the places and persons we experience during a dream. Everyone is the same in the creation of the Lord. To favour some as saints and sages and condemn others as ignoramuses and sinners is nothing but injustice and partiality. As the Lord has granted you all the boons you desired, it is up to you to utilise them in the proper way. You have got immense power now. You can do and undo things. Hence start at once on the mission of your life for which your mother Maya has been yearning so much. Fight against the Devas. Overthrow them from their power. Strip them of their riches and glory. Lord it over them. Make them your slaves.

“Live a life of ease and pleasure, using every object you could conceive of for your sensual enjoyment. Eat, drink and be merry. Live gloriously. Extend your sway over all the worlds created by Lord Siva. You should reign not only over them, but also establish your dynasty to rule over everyone for generations to come. Thus you will restore the glory now lost to the Asura dynasty.” In these thrilling and perverse words Sukracharya instructed Surapadma, Simhamukha and Tarakasura.

After having received the benedictions and final exhortations of their Guru Maharaj, Surapadma and his brothers began their career of conquest over the Devas. Surapadma established his capital at Mahendrapuri, in the South. Simhamukha had his capital in Asuram, in the North. Tarakasura built his capital near Emakoodam. These cities were duly planned and perfected by the

divine architect, Visvakarma. The three brothers had their own independent kingdoms established around their capitals and were reigning over them, to the terror and dismay of the Devas.

Not satisfied with the vast kingdoms allotted to them, the brothers then proceeded to the habitation of the Devas to deprive them of their sovereignty and freedom. Surapadma invaded Indraloka, took Indra prisoner and made him work as a fisherman in the capital! Brahma was asked to officiate as the *Purohit*. Vayu, the god of wind, was appointed as the sweeper of the streets of his capital; to Varuna, the god of rain, was assigned the task of sprinkling gentle drops of water over the streets to lay the dust; the Sun was given to his son, Banukopan, as a toy to play with; Lord Vishnu alone was left undisturbed. In this way Surapadma, along with his brothers, subjected the Devas to every kind of ignoble persecution and insult. These privations and dishonour they had to undergo as a punishment for cowardly indifference they showed when Daksha blasphemed Lord Siva. The curse of Nandi had come home.

4. The Tyranny of the Asuras

In his rank ambition, Surapadma sent his son, Banukopan, to capture Indraloka and to make prisoners of Devendra and his consort. The army of the Asuras took and plundered Indraloka. Unable to bear the tortures, Devendra and his consort fled away from Devaloka in the guise of parrots and dwelt in Shiyali, in South India. But Indra's son, Jayantan, was brought to Mahendrapuri and imprisoned there. The disguised Indra and his consort were offering prayers to Lord Siva to save them from the onslaught of the Asuras and restore them back to their kingdom. After a while, leaving his consort under the protection of Maha Shashta, Indra proceeded along with other Devas to Mount Kailasa, to request the Lord to protect them from the ruthless tyranny of the Asuras. During his absence, Ajamukhi, sister of Surapadma, by the exercise of her black art tried to abduct Indrani forcibly and take her to Surapadma. But she herself got wounded in the attempt; and the news of the inglorious treatment meted out to Ajamukhi by Maha Shashta infuriated further the power-mad Surapadma, who in his wounded pride, used his whip on the Devas more mercilessly than before.

In the meanwhile, Sage Agastya, at the command of Lord Siva, was proceeding South, with a Kamandalu of water from the *Akasa Ganga*. On the way, Krownchan, an Asura who had assumed the shape of a mountain, tried to entice the Rishi from his path. Aware of the trick the Asura was playing, the Rishi cursed him to remain in the shape of the mountain till he came to perish at the hands of Lord Karttikeya. Then Agastya continued his journey and, crossing the Vindhya in due time, entered South India. One day, here, when his attention was engaged elsewhere, his Kamandalu of water was spilt on the ground by the mischievous pranks of a crow. Annoyed at this, the Rishi tapped the crow on the head. To his surprise, he saw before him Lord Ganesha. By his grace, the water that was spilt became the source of the river Cauveri, which flowed, among other places, alongside the garden in which Indra and his consort were doing Tapas for Lord Siva's grace.

Subsequent to this, Agastya killed the two sons of Ajamukhi. It came about thus. These two sons, Bilvalan and Vatapi by name, used to invite the passers-by in the forest for a feast in their house. On each of such occasions, Vatapi would be cut to pieces, cooked and served as meat for the guests. When the guests had finished their dinner, Bilvalan would call for his brother, Vatapi, and the latter would come out alive and whole, piercing the abdomen of the guest who had eaten him.

The Asura brothers would then feast on the unsuspecting, murdered guests. But, Agastya, who sensed this cruel trick in time, gently rubbed his abdomen, murmuring '*Vatapi Jirnobhava*' (let Vatapi become digested), and the Asura thus perished, unable to do anything. Agastya then turned his wrath on the other and killed him also.

The Devas imprisoned by Surapadma and his brothers were in the meanwhile undergoing agonies of torture. As days passed, the persecution was becoming more and more atrocious. Unable to bear their sufferings any longer, the Devas, led by Brahma, Vishnu and Indra, started on a journey to Mount Kailasa to make a supplication to Lord Siva for immediate relief and protection.

5. Nativity and Boyhood

While the Devas, with Lord Vishnu, Brahma and Indra at their head, were proceeding towards Mount Kailasa as narrated in the preceding chapter, the great sages, Sanaka, Sanatkumara, Sanatana and Sanandana had arrived at Kailasa to receive instructions from Lord Siva, regarding the fourfold path to Self-realisation i.e., Yama, Niyama, Yoga and Samadhi. The Lord explained to them the various details of these four stages, and by way of demonstrating the last stage, viz., Samadhi, He Himself remained in it, completely absorbed in Supreme Silence (Maha Mouna). Thus He showed the Rishis that the last stage is not to be explained but to be realised actually in that state of Supreme Silence.

At this critical juncture, the Devas along with Indra, Brahma and Vishnu entered the hills and were stopped from proceeding further by Nandi Deva, who explained to them how it was not a suitable time to see the Lord. Overcome by disappointment at this, the Devas retreated, not knowing what to do. They held an emergent council of war, determined to find out some way out of this impasse. They were quite convinced that without Lord Siva's grace and help they could not dream of overthrowing the tyranny of the Asuras; but they were unable to devise any means by which this grace and help could be obtained; nor, at the same time, had they the courage to approach and disturb the Lord in His meditation. Hence they found themselves at their wit's end.

Brahma suggested that Manmatha, the god of love, should essay to wake up the Lord from his Yogic trance. Though at first he refused, Cupid was forced to yield to the request of all the Devas and made his way to the presence of Lord Siva. With his arrows of flowers he awoke Lord Siva from His *Maha Mouna*. At this disturbance, there broke out from the Trikuti of the Lord terrific beams of unendurable light and heat which burnt Manmatha to ashes. This made the Devas more panicky. They rushed in to the presence of the Lord, fell at His feet and beseeched Him to save them from His Rays and from the Asuras. The Lord sympathised with their plight and assured them of protection. And at the request of Rati, the wife of Manmatha, the latter was brought back to life and made visible to Rati, though invisible to all others. Having thus been assured of help, the Devas left Kailasa, anxiously awaiting the day of their release from the tyranny of the Asuras.

Parvati Devi, who had been born as daughter to the Himavan, was doing severe Tapas on Lord Siva for attaining Him as her husband. The Lord, much pleased with her penance, appeared before her in the guise of a hunter. After testing the purity, sincerity of Parvati and her intense devotion to Him, He revealed Himself to her and promised her that He would marry her very soon.

Parvata Rajan (Himalayas), father of Parvati, accordingly made preparation for the marriage; and it was duly performed on a lavish and grand scale. Lord Siva retired with Parvati to Mount Kailasa.

Shortly after this, the Devas appeared before Him and reminded Him of His promise to redeem them from their present slavery to the Asuras. In order to help them as desired, He assumed His original form with six faces. From each of these faces a Divine spark shot forth. The resplendence of these Divine sparks only tended to increase the sufferings and confusion of the Devas. But the Lord ordered Vayu (wind-god) and Agni (fire-god) to carry these six sparks and leave them in the sacred Ganga, who was to take them to a tank known by the name of Saravanappoihai. Vayu and Agni obeyed at once. By the grace of the Lord, the sparks were carried by holy Ganga to Saravanappoihai. On arriving at the tank, the sparks assumed the form of six children of unparalleled beauty. Each baby was lying on a lotus and was being lulled to sleep by the Devis of the Karttikai (the 3rd constellation of the 27 Stars). To witness this Avatara of the Saviour, all the Devas hastened to the tank along with Lord Siva and Parvati. Parvati, out of the extreme fondness of a mother, took up the babes together and called them *Skanda*. Instead of their remaining as six separate individual babes, there arose the form of one Deity with six faces and twelve hands. Hence he was known as Lord *Shanmukha*, the Lord with six faces. As he was nursed by the six Devis of the Karttikai Star, he was known also as *Karttik Swami*, or *Karttikeyan*. Thus, to the great joy of the persecuted Devas, the Lord Himself appeared in the form of Shanmukha to protect the good and to punish the wicked. As the form of Lord Shanmukha originated in a tank of shrubs, he was known as *Saravanabhava*. Along with Him there appeared nine other divine heroes, the eldest of them being Veerabahu by name. These nine brother heroes were to assist Lord Skanda in His war with the Asuras.

Even as a boy Lord Shanmukha showed his extraordinary prowess and valour. His Lilas during boyhood supplied confirmation to the Devas that He was the fittest saviour and the best General to command the army against the mighty Asura, Surapadma. Once, while He was playing up and down the hills, some Devas, being ignorant of the real greatness of the Lord, dragged him playfully to fight, treating Him as an ordinary child. Ultimately Indra arrayed his army against this boy for a fight, but was defeated in the end and almost killed. At the intervention of Narada, the Devas realised their folly in fighting against their own saviour and begged His pardon. Out of compassion the Lord brought back the dead Devas to life.

On one occasion, He heard the news of the terror and destruction caused by a goat-headed Asura. The Lord immediately sought him out and, in a hand-to-hand fight, took hold of the Asura-goat by his horns. But out of mercy, instead of killing him, He made him his Vahana or vehicle.

Once, the Devas along with Brahma and Vishnu came to Mount Kailasa to have Darshan of Lord Siva. While returning after their worship, they had Darshan of Lord Shanmukha, and all others offered their humble obeisance to Him, too. But Brahma, obsessed by a sense of his rank and importance, declined to do so and ignored Lord Shanmukha. Noticing and resenting this attitude of Brahma, Lord Karttik called him to His hall and asked him to take a seat along with other Devas. When they were all seated, Subrahmanya put a series of queries to Brahma. Brahma answered them. Finally Lord Karttik asked Brahma whether he could explain the real significance of the Pranava (Om). Brahma was unable to do this satisfactorily. Thus proving the ignorance of Brahma,

and with the intention of punishing him for his pride Lord Shanmukha ordered him to be imprisoned. The work of creation from that time onwards was taken over by Himself. The news of Brahma's imprisonment reached Lord Siva, when the Devas interceded on Brahma's behalf and requested Him to release Brahma. Lord Siva proceeded with the other Devas to the abode of Lord Skanda and asked Him to release Brahma. But Lord Skanda at first refused to do so on the ground that a Deva who did not know the significance of the Pranava was not fit to function as the Creator of the universe. However, in obedience to the words of his father, Shanmukha released Brahma from prison. Then Sankara playfully challenged Lord Skanda to explain the meaning of the Pranava himself. Shanmukha accepted the gage thus thrown to him and, treating his father as a disciple expatiated on the subject. Siva was delighted with the thoroughness of the exposition and Himself for the first time realised the immensity of the significance as expounded by his philosopher son.

After some days, Lord Siva thought it time to prepare Subrahmanya for the fight against the Asuras. He summoned him accordingly and blessed him with the peerless *Vel* (Spear) and many other formidable weapons. Veerabahu and his eight brothers made all the necessary arrangements for the expedition under the guidance of Lord Shanmukha. When everything was made ready, the Lord gave him His benediction and assurance of victory; and loudly cheered by the Devas, who were witnessing the scene, Lord Subrahmanya, accompanied by his nine brothers and hosts of other warriors, proceeded to south for the conquest of the Asuras.

On the way, He met the mountain-asura, Krowncha, who was entrapping and killing innocent passers-by. With one throw of his *Vel*, Lord Subrahmanya, ended the cruel pastime of the wicked wretch. The destruction of Krowncha, one of the lieutenants of Tarakasura, infuriated the latter, and he came raging to Lord Shanmukha. He had the Sudarsana Chakra of Lord Vishnu dangling around his neck as a token of his having defeated Lord Vishnu! In the grim fight that ensued, Tarakasura employed all the known tactics of warfare and used innumerable missiles against the army of the Devas battling under the generalship of Lord Subrahmanya. But to his utter disappointment and dismay, no missile had any effect on Him, and, what was disastrous to him, none returned to the sender, as it was the wont heretofore. Having failed with every other weapon, Taraka took up the *Pasupatastra*, which he had wrested from Lord Siva and sent it in due form against Lord Karttik. The latter, meditating with concentration upon the glories of his Father, calmly received the Astra and kept it aside. This unexpected finale filled the Asura with dread and a sense of helplessness. At last the Lord despatched his *Vel*, and Tarakasura, the younger brother of Surapadma, was killed. Lord Shanmukha then proceeded to south.

News of the death of Tarakasura was carried to Mahendrapuram, the capital of Surapadma, and to Asuram, the capital of Simhamukha, by Asurendra, son of the dead demon. After traversing many lands, the Lord reached the seashore in the south and halted at the place called Tiruchendur. Fresh news reached Him there through the Devaguru of the great atrocities and cruelties perpetrated by the Asuras afresh against the Devas.

6. The Shadows of War

While Lord Skanda, the General of the Devas, was camping at Tiruchendur along with His army, He sent from His camp a messenger to Mahendrapuri, the capital of Surapadma. The Lord ordered the messenger to inform Surapadma that the Devas were ready for a fight with him and that

the war could be averted only if the Asura released Jayanta, son of Devendra, from prison and abstained from giving any more trouble to the Devas. As envoy to Surapadma, Veerabahu Devar was chosen; and he obeyed the words of the Lord and prepared himself for his southward journey across the ocean to Mahendrapuri.

With the blessings of the Lord, Veerabahu Devar started on his journey. On the way he came across an Asura, Veerasingan by name, who was the ruler of Lanka. The Asura tried to prevent the messenger from crossing over his land. Dragged to fight the demon, Veerabahu showed his prowess by making short work of the Asura. This was repeated in the case of another Asura, Ativeeran. The messenger then continued his journey to Surapadma's capital. To his great surprise Veerabahu saw that innumerable Asuras with curious shapes were guarding the numerous gates of the fort round the city of Veeramahendrapuri and that it was no easy task to effect an entrance into it. Deciding, however, to cut away for himself into the city, he approached one of the gates of the fortress.

An elephant-faced Asura, Gajamukhasura by name, challenged him and engaged him in combat, and it was only after a hard fight that Veerabahu was able to overcome his opponent. Desirous of obtaining an intimate knowledge of the city and the life of the people there, Veerabahu entered the city incognito. Assuming the form of a very small creature by the Siddhi of *Anima*, Veerabahu entered the city of Surapadma unknown to and unseen by the Asuras.

A sight of the city of the Asuras created feelings of sympathy and jealousy in the mind of the messenger—sympathy that a city of such incomparable grace and beauty should come to be inhabited only by people of low Asuric nature and that it was to perish so soon for the sins of its inhabitants; and jealousy at the power of the Tapas of the Asuras, by which they had been able to create such a super-city with all its many enviable perfections.

The messenger, in the course of his perambulations in the city, sighted the prison in which Indra's son Jayanta was bemoaning his fate as a prisoner. He cheered him up and assured him of a quick release by Lord Karttik. Thence Veerabahu proceeded in his subtle shape to the Durbar hall of Surapadma. He was greatly dazzled at the grandeur and the pomp of the Asura's Durbar, unparalleled even in Devaloka. By the Grace of Lord Subrahmanya, the messenger Veerabahu was provided with a Divine Simhasana (throne) on a level with the one on which Surapadma was himself sitting. Disconcerted and annoyed at the unprecedented disturbance created by the messenger and enraged at his defiant demeanour, Surapadma, controlling himself with a mighty effort, enquired of Veerabahu of his identity and the purpose of his visit.

Undaunted in spirit and unswerving in his faith in Lord Shanmukha, Veerabahu explained his mission, after introducing himself as the humble messenger of the glorious son of Lord Siva. He informed Surapadma that he had been ordered to visit his capital and ascertain his mind as to whether he was agreeable to releasing Jayanta and abstaining from troubling the Devas further or whether he was prepared for a fight with Lord Subrahmanya, who had come down from Kailasa for the purpose of saving the righteous and punishing the wicked. Insulted and infuriated, Surapadma bluntly refused to accept any of the terms offered by the Lord to him, on the ground that it would be below his dignity and prestige even to listen to such messages. He ridiculed the idea of his being dictated to by a mere child, of whom he would make mincemeat at the first encounter. These

haughty and arrogant words of Surapadma so excited and provoked Veerabahu, who, in an outburst of anger, cursed Surapadma and his Asura dynasty to an early ruin at the hands of the Lord. This was sufficient to enrage Surapadma and his followers and induce them to vent their spleen on the messenger. But Veerabahu outwitted them all and returned safe to Tiruchendur to report to the Lord all that had happened in Veeramahendrapuri.

In the meantime, imperious Surapadma called a council of war and, with the help of his ministers, began to concert measures for offensive and defensive operations against the enemy. A few of his advisers tried to persuade against Surapadma to release the Devas and Devendra's son and make peaceful compromise with the Lord. Simhamukha pleaded that as Lord Subrahmanya was, as the messenger had pointed out, none other than Lord Siva Himself in the form of a young boy, "To obey Him would be worthy of us and could bring nothing but good to all of us, and to disregard Him is to court certain destruction." But the doomed Asura king, in his arrogance and pride, would not listen to such wise counsels.

Accordingly, on the orders of the king, mighty preparations for the ensuing fight were taken in hand and completed with great expedition. Simhamukha went back to his capital, promising his brother to come to his help when the time came and bring his army immediately on the declaration of war.

7. The Rout of the Asuras

On hearing from Veerabahu that the Asuras were ready for the fight, Lord Karttik shifted His army camp from Tiruchendur to Emakudam, very near the city of the Asuras, Mahendrapuri. News of this soon reached Surapadma, and he at once despatched a battalion to drive away the enemy from the outskirts of the city.

Banukopan, the eldest son of Surapadma, who had been given command of the battalion for the fight on the first day sallied forth and found the whole host of the army of the Devas arrayed against him. The grim fight between the two mighty armies then began. The Devas suffered very heavy casualties at the hands of Banukopan and his battalion. Leaders like Veerabahu and his brothers were laid low and in a dead faint by the secret Astras of Banukopan.

On receipt of news of how day was going against the Devas, the Lord sent his *Mohanastra* to cover the whole army of the Asuras, and all the warriors who had been killed or thrown into a swoon by Banukopan were restored. The Astra sent by the Lord winged its way in the meanwhile towards Banukopan. Realising the gravity of the situation, the young chief with the help of Maya, his grandmother, disappeared from the field unnoticed and made his way to the palace, where he acquainted his father, Surapadma, with the latest phase of the fight. The redoubtable chief of the Asuras himself took over the command on the second day.

Enraged at the discomfiture of Banukopan and determined to crush the army of the Devas once for all, Surapadma himself gave battle to the Devas and began to work havoc on them. Ugran, one of the leaders of the Bhutaganas (on the side of Devas) after an arduous fight killed Atisuran, the son of Simhamukha. Roused to a high pitch of fury at this set-back, Asurendra, son of Taraka,

threw himself into the thick of the fight and sent celebrated leaders like Kanakan, Unmathan, Manthan and many other flying from the field.

Veerabahu Devar hurried to that wing of the army and soon found himself in a hand to hand sword fight with the dreaded Asura prince, Asurendra. Their grim fight seemed endless, victory leaning now to one side and then to the other, alternately. But Veerabahu Devar by the exercise of his utmost powers at last succeeded in killing Asurendra. This brought Surapadma himself into the active fight and, by the exertion of his supreme valour, he soon made short work of the eight brothers of Veerabahu Devar, who immediately engaged him in deadly combat. After a prolonged and sanguinary engagement, Surapadma realised the mettle of the opponent he had to deal with and directed his special *Danda* against him. The *Danda* struck Veerabahu on the chest and laid him out bleeding and unconscious. The fall of Veerabahu encouraged Surapadma and he chased the remnants of the demoralised Deva army out of the field.

Lord Shanmukha now emerged to the front and faced the triumphant Asura king. He began with a series of missiles which promptly shattered, one by one, all the weapons and insignia of Surapadma and his followers. Then He despatched His *Chakrayudha* which annihilated hundreds of thousands of the Asura army. Finding the ordinary arrows to be of no avail against his formidable foe, Surapadma took up the *Pasupatastra* which he had received as a boon from Lord Siva, and directed it at Lord Shanmukha, confidently expecting his enemy to fall immediately, as the wonderful and mighty Astra had never been known to fail before. To his consternation and terror, however, Lord Shanmukha calmly took hold of the Astra and kept it aside. Now realising in a measure the valour and greatness of Shanmukha, who could handle such an Astra in such a manner, Surapadma, taking recourse to his powers of Maya suddenly disappeared from the battlefield unseen and retired to his palace.

The next day, being the third day of the battle, Banukopan equipped himself for the fight with special care and made his appearance in the field. At the very outset Veerabahu and Banukopan confronted each other. And both realised that the contest was to be a fight to the finish. To free himself completely from this grim encounter, Banukopan, in the flash of a moment and with the swiftness of a hurricane, sent out his *Mohanastra* against the Devas; and the whole host of the leaders were rendered unconscious and dropped into the sea! It was a critical moment. But Shanmukha was more than equal to the emergency. He directed his *Vel* to bring back safe and sound all the discomfited leaders; and to the dismay of the Asuras, all those who were thought to have been sent to their certain doom were again seen soon afterwards stationed and arrayed against the Asuras as if nothing had happened!

Lord Shanmukha now issued orders to the army of the Devas to take Veeramahendrapuri by storm. Surapadma reorganised his forces and stoutly resisted the onrush of his enemies into his capital. Hiranyan, his second son, hastened to the help of his father, backed by a mighty host under his command. To offset this, Veerabahu now brought his forces to this spot of the field. The day's business then began in grim earnest. At first the Devas suffered heavy casualties. But there was no resisting the terrific sallies of the mighty Veerabahu, who slowly but steadily pushed Hiranyan and his forces back. Hiranyan now perceived that the days of the glory of the Asura dynasty had been numbered. Desirous of preserving himself to do the funeral rites of his family members and, if

possible, to try and rehabilitate the lost fortunes of his people, Hiranyan disappeared from the field and lived in concealment, far away from Mahendrapuri.

After the flight of Hiranyan, Agnimukha, another son of Surapadma, appeared on the scene of battle. Though the fire-faced young chief was successful for a time and inflicted severe casualties on the forces of the Devas, he had to succumb ultimately to the superior strategy of Veerabahu Devar. Finding himself no match for the latter, Agnimukha prayed to his Ishta Devi, Bhadra Kali for assistance. At his prayer Sri Devi came and in a fury rushed forth and worked havoc on the army of the Devas. But on approaching Veerabahu Devar, she smiled graciously on him, wished him success and disappeared! This sobered Agnimukha and, marshalling all his strength, he resumed his fight and struggled desperately against Veerabahu Devar, but soon lost his life. On the death of Agnimukha, the other sons of Surapadma took command of the situation but fell very early an easy prey to the irresistible Veerabahu.

Banukopan now made his third appearance on the battle front. After a long and tough fight, he was overcome by superior forces; but through the influence of Maya, he disappeared again from the scene and was fighting with great destructive effect, himself unseen by his opponents. Observing this, Veerabahu Devar with the aid of a *Jnana Astra* put an end to his Mayaic concealment and forced him to come out of his hiding. A terrible hand to hand fight then ensued between the two commanders. Angry and annoyed at the trouble that he was being put to, Veerabahu exerted himself as never before and soon had the satisfaction of seeing Banukopan falter in his tracks. He then gathered himself in a supreme effort and administered the *coup de grace* by cutting off the head of the Asura chieftain.

News of this catastrophe was soon brought to Surapadma, whose grief knew no bounds. He paid a visit to the battlefield, and, retrieving the dead hero's remains, swore on them that he would avenge his loss without delay. He then summoned his brother, Simhamukha to Mahendrapuri and acquainted him with all that had happened. He exhorted him to do his utmost and turn the tide of fortune. Simhamukha accordingly appeared on the field and went through the army of the Devas like a tornado. Indeed, he looked invincible, and, one after another, all the Deva leaders succumbed to the relentless fury of Simhamukha. Veerabahu Devar stemmed this tide of reverses and soon accounted for all the sons of Simhamukha, single handed. Enraged at this, Simhamukha faced Veerabahu Devar. By one Astra he bound hand and foot the leaders of the Devas including Veerabahu and removed them all in that condition to a hill far away from the field. The mighty Simhamukha was audacious enough even to enter the base camp and kill many of the Bhutaganas there.

News of this disaster was soon brought to Lord Shanmukha. Realising the indomitable spirit and extraordinary valour of Simhamukha, Lord Shanmukha himself now appeared on the scene. By a number of Astras He brought back the Bhutaganas from their inglorious place of retreat; sound in limb and mind. He then took on Simhamukha himself in combat and, though greatly admiring his courage and prowess, yet mindful of the future, made an end of the Asura chief by one powerful Astra.

8. The Down-fall of Surapadma

Now left alone, deprived of the support of his brothers and many of his followers and enraged at the overwhelming and increasing strength of the Devas, Surapadma arrived at the battle front with the reserve forces of his army from the other worlds. Lord Shanmukha prevented further reinforcements from reaching Surapadma's camp and sought him out. The culminating point of the long standing rivalry had been reached. The final scene began. Surapadma fought with many of the Devas and Bhutaganas including Veerabahu Devar and inflicted on them severe injuries and utter defeat. At last the general of the Asuras found himself face to face with the general of the Devas. The fight that ensued was one of the most memorable in the annals of the universe. Finding the defeat was inevitable and imminent in a straightforward fight, Surapadma employed all the special and unholy tricks learned from his mother Maya. He brought back to life by a Mantra all the dead Asura warriors and also obtained a chariot with magic powers. By another Mantra given to him by Sukracharya, he took successively the form of a number of animals and birds and fought with Shanmukha. But all in vain! Shanmukha, the Lord, Himself was beyond all delusion; even Maya herself would have been powerless against Him, much more so her son. With a twang of his bow and the release of *Pasupatastra* from it, he swept back into eternity all the revived Asuras. Another Astra of the Lord brought the magic chariot to His side for His own use! Thus Surapadma was deprived of his Maya-chariot and had the mortification of seeing it used by the enemy! His Vahana also was killed by another Astra of the Lord. Upon this, Surapadma took the shape of a huge bird Chaksavaham. But the Lord, using Devendra in the shape of a peacock as his own Vahana, fought with the huge bird and cut it into two pieces. Surapadma, however, quitted the body of the bird in time and saved himself for a while.

At this hour of wounded pride and utter loneliness for Surapadma, the Lord felt in His heart some compassion for the mighty demon now laid low, both on account of the good which Surapadma had done in his previous births and of his heroic stand against Him, and revealed Himself in all His Divine glory before Sura. At the sight of His Divine Vishvarupa, the Mayaic delusion of the Asura rolled away, and with the *Divyachakshu* (divine eye) granted to him by the Lord of His own grace, Surapadma saw before him the Lord in the Virat Svarupa and bowed down before Him, craving mercy at His hands for all the evils that he had worked.

The Lord assumed his original form as Subrahmanya. On this, overpowered again by delusion, Surapadma resumed the fight! He took the shape of a huge tree. By His *Vel* the Lord cleft the tree into two vertical pieces. Unable to escape his doom, Surapadma took his natural form and rushed in great rage towards the Lord, with the desperate idea of bearing Him down to the ground by sheer physical weight and crushing Him! Tired of His strenuous labours and anxious to end the miseries of the Asura, the Lord with one throw of His *Vel* cut him in two. In commemoration of the great fight, the Lord ordained that the peacock and the cock, whose forms Surapadma had assumed for a while, should become, respectively, His Vahana (vehicle) and the emblem on his standard.

Thus ended the life of the mighty Surapadma and with him the troubles of the Devas for ever; and this happened on the Shashthi day of the bright fortnight in October-November, the sixth day after Dipavali.

9. The Weddings

I. DEIVAYANAI

Lord Shanmukha after His victory over the Asuras released all the Devas, who had been groaning as prisoners under the tyranny of the Asuras. To the great joy of the Devas, Subrahmanya returned to Tiruchendur with His victorious army and stayed there for a while. The Devas, along with Indra now released and at ease, worshipped the Lord there for all His mercy and goodness to them. Then they arranged a grand Puja for the Lord and glorified Him in a befitting manner.

In the early days of His residence in Kailasa with His Father, the Lord had met the daughters of Lord Vishnu, Amrutavalli and Sundaravalli by name. At first sight of the glorious son of Lord Siva, of whose *Bala Lilas* they had already heard, they both fell in love with Him. On being acquainted with this, the Lord graciously ordained that they should be born again—one as the daughter of Indra and the other of Nambirajan, a king of the hill tribes in South India.

Accordingly, Amrutavalli had been born as the daughter of Devendra and had grown up to be of marriageable age. Availing himself of the golden opportunity at Tiruchendur, Indra humbly reminded the Lord of His promise and requested Him to accept the hand of Amrutavalli, his daughter now known as Deivayanai, in marriage. Other Devas who were assembled there also supported his petition to the Lord. Lord Shanmukha consented and camped with His party at Tiruparankundram, a place north of Tiruchendur, near Madurai. Arrangements were immediately in full swing for a fitting celebration of the marriage. Invitations were sent out to all Devas to attend the function. Lavish preparations were made for their reception and comfort. Everyone invited had arrived and the ceremony was due to commence. Lord Shanmukha felt sore at the absence of His dear Father and Mother, when at the mere thought of them, Lord Shanmukha saw before Him His father Lord Siva with his consort, and Lord Ganesa. Everybody's joy at this reunion knew no bounds; and with heavenly pomp and magnificence the marriage of Lord Skanda with Deivayanai took place. After the marriage, all the Devas, with the permission of Lord Skanda and Lord Siva, retired to their respective worlds and joyously resumed their activities.

II. VALLI

Upendra, one of the Avatars of Lord Vishnu, once went to Vaikuntha to have Darshan of the Adimurti, Lord Vishnu, and Maha Lakshmi. When the three were in the hall, a great sage, Kanva Rishi, came in. To the great disappointment and chagrin of the sage, he was neither welcomed nor paid the usual respects by any one of the three who were there. In a rage he cursed them as follows:

Lord Vishnu was to be born as a dumb sage devoted to Lord Siva for many births; Lakshmi Devi was to be born as a deer roaming in deserted forests; and Upendra was to be born as a hunter of wild game. To mitigate the severity of the curse, Vishnu did rigorous Tapas on Lord Siva. Siva appeared before him and, knowing the purpose for which his devotee was performing the Tapas, called Kanva Rishi and asked him to reduce the period of his curse from 'many births' to one birth.

This was duly done; all the three were to be restored to their original states on the marriage between Skanda and Valli in the fullness of time.

Lord Vishnu thereafter came to the world as Sivamuni, a dumb saint, and was living in a forest. In the same forest, Upendra wandered about as a hunter. And Lakshmi in her life as deer was roaming about in the same forest. As preordained, the sage Sivamuni saw the beautiful deer and, strangely enough, felt passionate and agitated. The deer returned the love which the sage had evinced to her at sight. The sequel was that the deer was delivered of a human child, a girl. Seeing the child so different from herself, the deer abandoned the child to its fate and quitted the forest. Upendra, now in the form of a hunter, happened to arrive at the spot where the child was crying in a cluster of *Valli kodi* (a sort of creeper). He took up the child and, calling her Valli as she was found in a *Valli kodi*, brought her up in a manner befitting his station in life.

III. THE MARRIAGE

Devarshi Narada now reminded Skanda about His meeting with Sundaravalli in Kailasa and informed Him that she had been born as Valli, daughter to Nambirajan, the king of a hill tribe in South India. From the Rishi, Skanda also came to know that Valli was doing Tapas with the sole object of marrying Him. Desirous of bestowing His grace on her without delay, Skanda left for the hills, Valli's home. Disguised as a hunter, he saw the maid who was driving off the birds that were destroying the corn in the fields. He presented himself before her in the field and enquired of her whether any deer had come that way. The maid replied in the negative and took him to task for violating the proprieties by talking to a stranger maid in the manner in which he had done, when she was unchaperoned. But the hunter replied to her only by a contemptuous and defiant laugh! Enraged at this rude behaviour of the hunter, Valli cried out to her brothers for help. The unabashed hunter, however, proceeded to ask her to marry him on the spot and added that the main purpose of his coming to her was only to do so. In response to the cry of Valli, her seven brothers came running to the spot with their retinue where the hunter and Valli were. To the mystification and amazement of Valli and to the disappointment of the brothers, the mischievous hunter transformed himself into a big tree. Thinking that it was only a childish prank of Valli, they all went back, as they were unable to find any person in the vicinity except an innocent tree! As soon as their backs were turned, the tree reassumed the shape of the hunter, but he was unceremoniously driven out at the point of a stick by Valli. After a while Valli saw a tired and tottering old man coming towards her. Taking pity on him and on his helplessness, she offered him some fruits and water. The old man, while partaking of the offerings, made a proposal of marriage to her! This only provoked an amused and contemptuous smile from Valli! But she informed the old man politely that she had taken a vow to marry none but Lord Shanmukha. At this juncture, to the terror of Valli who had a dread of elephants, an elephant came rushing towards where they were standing in the field. Frightened out of her wits, she ran towards the old man and fell into his arms for protection and safety. The old man, however, when he had got Valli's assurance that she would marry him, mysteriously sent the elephant away. Now that all danger was over, Valli treated the whole matter lightly and refused to keep up her promise: she argued that to frighten a girl and get a promise out of her in that condition was unfair and that morally she was not bound by such a promise at all. No sooner were these words out of her mouth than the dreaded elephant came charging again. Her terror was so acute that she willingly and solemnly promised to marry the old man, if only he would send the awful elephant away out of her

sight. At the same moment, to her great astonishment and joy, she saw before her Lord Skanda with the *Vel* in His hand, exactly where the old man had stood courting her in such a strange fashion. Valli apologised to Him for her silly conduct and begged for His grace. Very much pleased with the intensity of her devotion, the Lord accepted her as His consort.

News of her meeting with a hunter and an old man spread far and wide in the neighbouring villages. Taking the hunter to be a vagabond, her father and brothers came up to Valli's abode, in order, they said, to knock some sense into that impudent scoundrel. Lord Skanda, who had again taken the form of a hunter, by a flourish of his *Vel*, burnt them all to ashes. But at the request of Valli, they were again brought back to life. Realising the fact that he was none but Lord Subrahmanya (the guardian angel of their family), they all prostrated themselves before Him and begged for His mercy.

To the great joy of Nambirajan and the Devas and in the presence of Devarshi Narada, the wedding of Valli was celebrated. With Valli and Deivayanai as His consorts, the Lord retired to the Skanda Hills near Kailasa, where He has His abode.

“Thus, to protect the good and to punish the wicked, the Supreme Lord came down taking the form and name of Skanda. With the peacock as His *Vahana*, the cock for the emblem on His banner and with *Vel* in His hand, Lord Skanda took His abode in the Skanda Hills, where He lived with His consorts Valli and Deivayanai.”

Glory to Lord Subrahmanya! Glory to His consorts Valli and Deivayanai! Glory to the Divine Weapon *Velayudha*! Glory to the peacock, the *Vahana* of Skanda! Glory to the cock on his banner! Glory to Lord Siva by whose grace everything is done! Glory to all who read and hear this story of Lord Subrahmanya and His *Lilas*! May the blessings of Lord Shanmukha be upon you all!

SECTION THREE

THE ESOTERIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STORY

I

The Puranas and the Itihasas were written by great sages to bring home and to popularise the hidden truths of the Vedas and the Upanishads. They illustrate through stories and narratives the deep significances of the teachings of the Vedas. The Skanda Purana deals with that aspect of the Lord as the Supreme General of the Devas, with six faces and twelve hands and having a Spear for His weapon. His consorts are Valli and Deivayanai. His *Vahana* is the peacock. Lord Krishna says in the Gita, “Of the Generals, I am Skanda.” The declaration of the Lord, again, “Whenever there is decline of righteousness and growth of unrighteousness, I come to the world to protect the good and to punish the wicked” is applicable in this instance also. It was to put an end to the atrocities of the Asura king Surapadma, that the Lord took His Avatara in the form of Karttik or Subrahmanya. The personalities in the Puranas together with the narratives are nothing but the highest expression of human aspirations to understand the Divine Play.

The Hero of the Skanda Purana is Lord Skanda Himself, known otherwise as Lord Subrahmanya. He is depicted with six faces and twelve hands. His *Svarupa* is Jyotirmaya. On the earth plane, every human being is an outcome of the five elements and the spirit within him. When the Lord took the human form, He was accordingly depicted in the same manner. Hence the spirit, signified by the sparks from Siva, took the appearance of a human personality, whose body comprised the five elements and who is the Lord of them. But to distinguish Him from ordinary human beings, the author thought it better to bestow six faces and twelve hands for the Divine-man. These six faces represent the following:

(i) Five, one element each: Ether, air, fire, water and earth. The sixth face represents the Spirit that bestows LIFE to the beings formed by the five elements.

(ii) The Sanskrit word *Bhagavan* means one who is possessed of the six godly attributes. And each face of Lord Skanda personifies one of such functions or attributes of the Almighty.

(iii) In the Tamil scriptures a clear account of the functions of the six faces of the Lord is given. One face is shining to remove ignorance and bestow Knowledge; another fulfils the desires of devotees and attends to their needs; a third face bestows strength and inspiration for the performance of rituals and sacrifices; a fourth brings out the inner secrets and helps the seekers of knowledge by revealing those secrets to them; a fifth face has the purpose of protecting the virtuous and punishing the wicked; and the sixth face stands for that function of the Lord that ignites Love and bestows happiness amongst the *Jivas*.

And, in concurrence with the six faces, the twelve hands work in harmony.

The *Vel*, peacock and cock are the emblems which assist the Lord in the fulfilment of His functions. The *Vel* is the Jnana Sakti of the Lord. It destroys ignorance and restores the *Jiva* to its original abode of pristine glory. The peacock and cock tear asunder the veil of Maya over the devotees and help them onwards on the path of God-realisation.

As it is very difficult for the human mind to grasp the abstract truths in the Vedas, the Skanda Purana, as is the case with all other Puranas, was couched in the form of a story illustrating in a simple way the supreme truths for the benefit of the average intelligence.

The *Jiva* who is none but the Paramatman does not realise its glorious state, due to the force of Avidya or ignorance. Hence, it undergoes sufferings and hardships, which merely drag the soul down from its supreme state of *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. In the same way, the Devas suffered much because of their ignorance and indifference. Further, Surapadma, in spite of his glorious Tapas, could not remain very long in his enjoyment of the life of pleasure for which he had done such severe penance.

The compassionate Lord, desirous of freeing the *Jiva* from this bondage, showers His grace on it and restores it to its supreme abode. And it is only by the grace of the Lord that this could ever be done. Surapadma, though by the grace of Lord Siva enjoyed all the wealth and prosperity of the world, yet, due to the force of his Avidya, had to take a wrong turn and lose everything in the end.

And it is only through the Grace of Lord Siva in the form of Lord Shanmukha that his ignorance was dispelled and he attained the supreme goal of human existence, i.e., Self-realisation.

In its travel back towards the Lord, from whom it has become separated temporarily, the Jiva undergoes many a hardship. The lower mind, in the form of Sukracharya, drags the Jiva down from its goal and intensifies its bondage still further. The teachings of Sukracharya to Surapadma are nothing more than the various arguments advanced by the lower mind to justify its own mean desires, thus preventing the onward progress of the Jiva towards God-consciousness. Though Surapadma had performed severe Tapas and acquired several boons through the grace of Lord Siva, he could not live longer, simply because of his following the teachings of the Asura Guru, the lower mind.

Thus, the Skanda Purana illustrates the play of Maya upon the Jivas, the suffering undergone in consequence and the final release from the clutches of Maya through the grace of Lord Shanmukha in the shape of Velayudha—the Jnana Sakti of the Lord.

The consorts of Lord Shanmukha are Valli and Deivayanai. Valli stands for the *Iccha Sakti*—the Power of Will. And the other, Deivayanai, stands for *Kriya Sakti*—the Power of Action. Thus should a Jiva aspiring to Godliness, having brought the will-power under control, strive ceaselessly till it reaches the goal.

Hence the three Saktis, in the form of *Vel*—Jnana Sakti, Valli—*Iccha Sakti*, and Deivayanai—*Kriya Sakti*, form part and parcel of Lord Shanmukha, who is also named as Saktidhara.

Glory to the Lord of the Saktis! Glory to the Lord who dispels ignorance amongst the devotees by His Velayudha.

Valli's Wedding

The true import of this wedding seems to be this. Valli represents the *Jiva* that has been separated from its original abode, eternal bliss, Paramatman, who is Lord Subrahmanya.

The separated *Jiva* roams in the wilderness of the forest of this world, due to the force of Avidya. To rescue this ignorant Jiva wandering in the wilderness, the Guru appears in the form of Rishi Narada by whose help the wedding takes place between Valli and Lord Karttik, i.e., the holy communion of the *Jiva* with the Supreme Brahman.

As the Jiva possessed unflinching and unswerving faith in the Lord, Valli was determined to marry only Lord Shanmukha and was able to realise her ambition in spite of the many obstructions.

Hence, having the two horns of Vairagya and Viveka, the *Jiva*, Valli, got herself finally rescued from the clutches of Maya—represented by her parents and other obstacles—and finally established herself in union with Lord Subrahmanya, the Supreme Abode of Bliss.

II

People have various views on the Svarupa of Lord Shanmukha who is also known as Lord Subrahmanya. Some consider Him as the Commander-in-chief of the Deva forces, some consider Him as a helper of the Devas, and therefore not even equal to the Devas themselves, though they think that He is a higher being than men.

The meaning of the very name Subrahmanya gives us a clue to His Real Identity; Subrahmanya means one who knows Brahman well; and Brahman alone can know Brahman. Therefore Lord Subrahmanya is Brahman Himself.

The story of Lord Subrahmanya's birth is very interesting. Lord Siva had six heads—four facing the four directions, one facing upwards and the other downwards. From the Third Eye on each face emanated *Tejas*. This Light filled all the directions. The whole of ether was permeated by this *Tejas*. Lord Siva then withdrew this *Tejas* into His own hands and gave it to Vayu (Wind-god). Vayu bore it for sometime; but, unable to endure it longer, gave it to Agni (Fire-god). Fire, in turn passed it on to Ganga (water). That *Tejas* assumed the shape of six children and floated on Saravana-lake. When Parvati took up these children, they together formed into one child with six heads. This was Shanmukha. And, He carried on His Lilas on this earth.

That is the story of Brahman also; and the above is the story of Creation. Brahman filled everything: Brahman was of the form of Supreme Light. It filled ether. Thence, it passed on to Air, Fire, Water and Earth. The symbology of Subrahmanya's birth, therefore, proves that He is no other than the Supreme Brahman Himself.

The Lord has six heads and, therefore, He is called Shanmukha. *Mukham* or the head contains all the five Jnana Indriyas. These five Jnana Indriyas *plus* the sixth Indriya, Buddhi, are the six gates through which the Antaratman receives impressions of objects. It is through these six "holes" that the Light of the Atman passes out. The very fact of the flowing out of consciousness through these six holes, proves to wise men that the Atman within is the form of Consciousness. This Inner Consciousness has, as it were, the six heads. So, too, has Lord Subrahmanya. He is the Supreme Brahman with six heads—the six Jnana Indriyas.

And, the Yogis explain that the six heads of Lord Subrahmanya represent the six centres (*Chakras*) within. Each head is of the form of each Devata of the six Chakras. This way, too, we come to the conclusion that Lord Subrahmanya is Para Brahman and not a mere divine being.

Meditation on Lord Subrahmanya, therefore, is, according to the Bhaktas, the surest way to obtain intuitive knowledge of Brahman. Lord Subrahmanya is Knowledge Absolute Itself; therefore, meditation on Him is productive of this Knowledge.

Apart from this, even if a beginner in concentration is taught the Svarupa of Lord Subrahmanya, and is asked to meditate on the six-headed form of His, riding on the peacock, holding the Spear, with Valli and Deivayanai beside Him, the aspirant would sit absorbed in Him for three hours without any difficulty. To pass the mind from one head to the other, from one eye to

the other of His eighteen eyes, from one hand to the other of His twelve arms, etc., etc., would be so absorbing that the mind would never wander.

As the aspirant advances in the practice, he can gradually dispense with all this paraphernalia and concentrate upon the *Vel* (Spear), alone. This Spear is the real Svarupa of Lord Subrahmanya. It represents Consciousness. When all the rest has vanished, this alone remains behind.

The characteristics of Buddhi are: depth of thought, heights of intuitive perception, breadth of vision, and sharpness of intellect. All these are represented by the *Vel* (Spear). It is high (tall). It is deep (i.e., it has a long stem which reaches down to the feet). Its leaf is broad. And, it has a sharp top. Therefore it symbolises Consciousness. The advanced Sadhaka meditates on this. One who meditates on this as Consciousness surely attains the Supreme Brahman which is Satchidananda.

May the blessings of Lord Subrahmanya be upon you all!

III

In common with all Hindu mythological accounts and stories, the descriptions of the legends about Subrahmanya also embody various esoteric truths. Lord Subrahmanya has six faces. He holds a Spear or *Vel*, and He rides on a peacock. A cock is His banner. He has two wives, Valli and Deivayanai. He is the son of Parama Siva. He came out of Siva's third eye, in the form of Fire or Light—Jyotis. His achievements consisted of the destruction of the great Asura Surapadma, who, with his assistants, was enslaving Indra and other Devas. He married Deivayanai, the daughter of Indra. On the advice of Narada he married also Valli, the foster-daughter of the hunter king Nambi, after testing her devotion pretty severely. Even as a boy, Lord Subrahmanya imprisoned Brahma for his ignorance of the meaning of the Pranava Mantra and released him only at the request of Lord Siva. Incidentally He also expounded to Lord Siva the same Mantra. All these accounts are the interesting details greatly appreciated and cherished by deeply devoted Subrahmanya's Bhaktas. The worship of Subrahmanya is more or less confined to South India though He is not unknown to the Hindus of the rest of India as Karttikeya. He is also worshipped by a large section of people in Sri Lanka. The Tamilians have a living faith in Subrahmanya and are as fond of His Lilas as the North Indians and the South Indian Vaishnavites are of Krishna's sports.

From the esoteric point of view, Subrahmanya is the Lord who incarnated Himself to illumine the intelligence of human beings and liberate them from ignorance of various kinds, which hides the truth from them. Since human beings are in different stages and levels of development, Lord Subrahmanya has to meet them on their own level for fulfilling His mission of enlightenment. This He does in a unique way.

His six heads are symbolical of the six Pranic or Vital centres—the six Chakras—of nervous activity in the human body, located in the spinal cord and at the junction of the eyebrows. It is through concentration on these centres that the Yogi acquires capacity to subordinate his lower nature, to sublimate it, and to utilize all his energy for establishing his identification with the one Lord of the universe, who is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute. Therefore, to say that Lord Subrahmanya's six heads represent these six vital centres is only to say that whenever an aspirant

attempts to rise above his human limitations and experience oneness with the Eternal, Lord Subrahmanya gives him all the strength he requires for conquering the evil inside him and for the acquisition of the final Truth.

The Spear or *Vel* is the weapon which pierces through the demon of ignorance. This is the Ekagra Chitta or one-pointed mind so much insisted upon in Raja Yoga without which progress is impossible for a Yogi. It is the preliminary for concentration, meditation and absorption (Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi) all of which together constitute the Yogic Samyama. In the legend, it is Surapadma, the Asura who is slain by the *Vel*. That Asura is none other than Ignorance.

That Subrahmanya came out of Siva's third eye is symbolic of His being the incarnation of Pure Intelligence, for Siva's third eye is known to be the eye of Wisdom or Jnana.

The peacock (on which Subrahmanya rides) is the most beautiful of all the birds. It is the one bird which can reveal its inner joy by dancing and displaying its gorgeous plumage. When it does so, it evidences its perfect balance—for it is a very heavy bird and it has to keep its balance on its two very slender feet. All these points relating to the peacock are utilised for illustrating the ideas concerning the inner significance of the Subrahmanya mythology. We can interpret the peacock as symbolising mental equipoise—the predominance of Sattva over Rajas and Tamas. That tranquillity or mental balance, when once attained, produces contentment and happiness. Such a mental condition reveals itself in a superior sort of self-satisfaction—a state similar to that of the peacock which spreads out its beautiful plumage. It is this predominating Sattva that is the prerequisite for the acquisition of True Knowledge—the knowledge symbolised by Lord Subrahmanya Himself.

Subrahmanya's cock-banner symbolises the approach or the dawn of Knowledge—it is the cock that proclaims the coming of the sun in the eastern horizon. The sun is the heavenly body that dispels darkness. Likewise the cock on Subrahmanya's banner announces the approach of Knowledge which will destroy all ignorance.

The two wives, Deivayanai and Valli, symbolise the two types of devotees among those who strive for Moksha or Liberation through union or oneness with the Supreme. One type consists of those who rigidly and sincerely observe the injunctions and follow the teachings of the Vedic scriptures and are thus the followers of Vaidika Karmas. That type is represented by Deivayanai, whom Subrahmanya married in the regular orthodox way. The other type consists of the ardent Bhaktas who attach more importance to right mental feeling and emotion than to rules and regulations. This type is symbolised by Valli, who grows as the foster-daughter of the hunter king, Nambi. Subrahmanya marries her in the combined Gandharva and Paisacha modes of marriage. He manifests love in wooing her and uses force in fighting against her relations who try to obstruct Him.

Subrahmanya legends also reveal that He is the God of the hill and other tribes whose modes of worship are primitive, crude and barbarous. That shows that Subrahmanya incarnated Himself only for the purpose of conferring knowledge upon all, whatever be their level of understanding or attainment. All the details relating to Subrahmanya legends can be interpreted correctly if we bear in mind the underlying truth that Subrahmanya is Supreme Consciousness in an embodied form.

This is amply borne out by the story about Subrahmanya having been the Guru of even His own Father. The story goes that He questioned Brahma about the meaning of Om and that, when Brahma revealed his ignorance of it, Subrahmanya put him into prison. When the matter reached Siva, He was naturally amused and playfully challenged Subrahmanya to interpret the Mantra Himself. But child Subrahmanya would not do so unless Siva became His disciple. Siva was fond enough of His child to assume the attitude of a disciple and got the explanation from His boyish lips. That incidentally won for Subrahmanya the name of Swaminatha. Here, too, we see that Subrahmanya symbolises Pure Consciousness which includes in it the meaning of even Om, the highest of all Mantras.

IV

This holy form consists of six faces and twelve hands. The hands bear different kinds of weapons. On the breast the most important weapon, the *Vel* is being kept. He rides on the peacock and holds the banner of cock. On either side are His Devis, Valli and Deivayanai. The peacock stands upon a black serpent. The entire picture is the form of Subrahmanya.

Let us see the inner meaning of the form. The six faces indicate that His presence shines on the four sides and also above and below. He seems also to express that He it is that is spoken about in all the six main religions. It is also hinted that He is the perfect being who is being sought after by the six means of knowledge. The six faces may also be taken to indicate the six Chakras or the centres of energy in the human body which are known to Yogis.

The twelve arms show that He alone creates, preserves, destroys, hides and blesses,—in fact does everything in the world.

Valli, Deivayanai and the *Vel* mean, respectively, *Ichha Sakti*, *Kriya Sakti* and *Jnana Sakti*, i.e., the force of Desire, the force of Action, and the force of Knowledge. It is indicated that all these three abide in Subrahmanya, who is Para Brahman Himself. The fact that Desire and Action forces are kept on either side of Him and that *Jnana Sakti* or the force of Knowledge alone is kept in His breast points out that Knowledge is the most important of them all and that it never gets separated from Him.

There is another form of Subrahmanya which is known as *Danda Pani*. When He is presented in that form, He stands alone, with the *Vel* but without Valli or Deivayanai. That also shows that He can be without the forces of Desire and Action, but cannot be without the force of Knowledge.

Subrahmanya married Valli according to the *Gandharva* mode. He did not obtain the permission of her parents for doing so. That also shows that Valli is His Desire force.

On the other hand His marriage with Deivayanai was after His victory over the Asuras. Out of gratitude, Indra gave Subrahmanya his own daughter Deivayanai in marriage. This was done according to Vedic rites. These events point to the fact that Deivayanai shows His Action force.

The *Vel* or Spear was given to Subrahmanya by Parvati, the embodiment of Siva Sakti. It, therefore, indicates that the Spear is the symbol of True Knowledge as coming out of Parvati, the Para Sakti. The shape of *Vel* also shows that Knowledge in the form of Jyotis will start from the Muladhara Chakra, represented by the bottom of the *Vel*, pass through the intermediate Nadis (which are represented by the body of the *Vel*) and pierce through the thousand-petalled Brahma-randhra, which is represented by the sharp, leaf-shaped end of the *Vel*, and in the end will shine resplendent in the top beyond all these Chakras or Nadis. Shanmukha's Vahana, the peacock, shows the shape of the Pranava or ॐ. It is of the shape of the Bindu. When the peacock spreads out its tail, it has the round shape of the Pranava. Within it is the Para Brahma Jyoti, which is the form of Murugan or Subrahmanya. The subordinated serpent kept in check by the peacock's feet shows that Maya or impurity is completely overpowered by the power of Pranava.

The cock in the banner signifies the Sound-form or the Nada of Pranava. It is the nature of the cock to crow at the moment when the sun makes himself just visible in the horizon.

Let us now examine the meaning of the legend about Surapadma who was killed by Subrahmanya. The Asuras Taraka, Simhamukha and Surapadma were the sons of Maya. They persecuted the Devas and imprisoned Devakumara. Murugan heeded the prayers of the Devas, killed the three Asuras with His Spear and liberated Devakumara from prison. Later, according to the request of the victorious Devas, Murugan married Deivayanai, the daughter of Indra. The inner significance of their accounts is as follows. The three sons of Maya are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas,—the three Gunas. The original cause of the three Gunas is also shown to be the impurity known as Maya. The Jiva is ever under the influence of these three Gunas and is subjugated by them. God Subrahmanya listens to the prayers of the Jiva and liberates him from the clutches of the three foes, the three Gunas. Not only does he liberate the Jiva, but also (by marrying) unites the Jiva with Himself.

The Wedding of Valli

In the dark forest of the mountain, Valli frowns in the midst of the cruel hunters, her relations, and spends her time in throwing stones to drive away birds which peck the grains in the fields. But her mind was always in love with Lord Murugan. In right time, Murugan comes in different guise, tests her, frightens her with the elephant through the help of Vinayaka and in the end reveals His real form, and takes her away to marry. At that time he encounters the opposition of Valli's foster parents, and kills them. But in response to Valli's request He brings them back to life and celebrates the marriage with her.

Let us examine the esoteric meaning hidden in this story. The dark forest is Tamas; the cruel hunters are Rajas. Valli is the Jiva who is in the grasp of these two. Her guarding the grains in the field is her earnest Sadhana to realise the Paramatman. The birds that come to peck the grains are the obstacles to her rigid Sadhana. To save herself, she keeps in her hand the catapult, which is Viveka and uses the pebbles which represent Vairagya. Thus she drives away the obstacles. To test the strength of her Sadhana, Murugan appears before her in disguises and in the end shows her the meaning of Pranava in the form of the elephant. Then the forces of Rajas which envelop her (which are symbolised by the hunters who surrounded Valli) are vanquished and transformed into Suddha

Sattva. After that the Jiva is released and given the supreme status of identification with Para Brahman.

SECTION FOUR

BHAKTA-SAINTS OF LORD SKANDA

1. Narada

While Narada was touring the three worlds, he met the Sapta Rishis: Atri, Bhrgu, Kutsa, Vasishtha, Gautama, Kasyapa and Angirasa. Envious of their exalted state, Narada wished to become the most famous of the Rishis. He went to Sri Ganesha and asked him how he could become greater than the Seven Rishis. Sri Ganesha instructed Narada how to observe the *Kirttikai Vrata* and initiated him into the worship of Lord Skanda. Having performed this Vrata for twelve years, Narada achieved his aim by the grace of Lord Subrahmanya.

2. King Muchukunda

Muchukunda was a king ruling over South India having his capital at Karur. Desirous of doing Tapas on Lord Subrahmanya, the king approached sage Vasishtha and requested him for initiation into the correct observances of the Vratas. The sage explained to the king the importance of observing the *Sukravara* (Friday), *Kirttikai* and the *Skanda Shashthi* Vratas of Lord Subrahmanya. Having learnt in detail the Vratas, their importance and the methods of observing them, king Muchukunda started observing them with faith and devotion. After sometime, while the king was greatly absorbed in his devotion to Lord Skanda, the Lord appeared before him and granted him many boons. The Lord had made his followers, Virabahu and other warriors of his own forces, serve the king. At the behest of the Lord, Virabahu Devar and others, taking human births, obeyed the commands of the King and helped him. The king enjoyed much peace, plenty and prosperity by His grace.

King Muchukunda's might was such that even Devendra had to approach him to get his help for defeating the Asuras. The king complied with the request of Indra and defeated the Asura King Valan. When he returned from Devaloka he was given by Vishnu the Murti or idol of Somaskanda. Arriving at his kingdom, the king performed the Pratishtha Ceremony for the Somaskanda Murti at Tiruvarur, in South India. After sometime he had a son, Agnivarman by name. Entrusting the kingdom to his son, the king retired peacefully to Mount Kailasa for spending the rest of his life in Tapas.

3. Siva Kavi

A poet in South India by name Poyamoli Pulavar in his early days had intense devotion for Lord Siva. Due to the intensity of his love to Lord Siva, he refused to bow to, or sing the glory of, any other deity including Lord Shanmukha. The Lord gave him the vision Beatific and showed him

the Unity of the forms of Siva and Shanmukha. Thereafter, he developed greater love and sincerity of devotion to Lord Shanmukha. The poet was known as Siva Kavi.

4. Nakkirar

More than 2000 years ago, there lived in the ancient Tamil land a very great sage and scholar, Nakkirar by name. Even gods dreaded his erudition and learning; and his devotion for Lord Subrahmanya knew no bounds.

Nakkirar was a Brahmin poet-laureate of Pandia king of Madurai, in South India. Out of arrogance and haughtiness, this poet prevented a poor Brahmin poet from receiving gifts from the king. He even went to the extent of criticising adversely the verses composed by Lord Siva on behalf of the poor Brahmin. As a result of this, the Lord cursed the poet-laureate to suffer from leprosy. Realising the greatness of the Lord, the poet craved His pardon. Taking mercy on him, the Lord asked him to make a pilgrimage to Kailasa when his leprosy would be cured. Nakkirar started on his pilgrimage. On the way, at a place called Kalahasti, in South India, Nakkirar halted on the banks of a lake and sat down for Dhyana under a huge banyan tree. During his meditation he was disturbed by a curious incident. A leaf fell down, but fell half in water and half on land. The water-half became a fish and the land-half a bird. The fish tried to drag the bird, but the bird attempted to pull up the fish and fly away. A dry leaf initiated a war between two creatures which evolved out of itself. Nakkirar's meditation was disturbed by this strange event.

Alas! There was harboudng here a big devil, a *Brahmarakshasa*, who had made it a vow to gather 1000 Siva Bhaktas, whose meditation would be disturbed in this way, and after the number 1000 would be completed to devour them altogether. That terrible monster came now and threw him into a cave where he had already collected 999. Making thus 1000, he went to the wondrous lake to bathe; for even devils have certain good habits.

The 999 devotees of Siva, whose meditation having been thus disturbed, were captured by the devil and put in that cave, had been there for untold years fed sumptuously by the devil host; for, to preserve them stout till the hour would come, it was the devil's lookout. They now cried and cursed the newcomer, Nakkirar, that he came to bring them all to miserable death in a few minutes to come. They held God to blame and God's dear Nakkirar to blame! The sage Nakkirar knew the whole situation now; the devil was away from the cave still. Should his Kailasa Yatra thus end to be an after-death Yatra, and the will of his God of Madurai get frustrated by a devil? Should all the devotion of the 999 pious men, for a paltry cause of a moment's disturbance by the machinations of a devil, end to be useless? It was, of course, all a trial, and a severe trial; and Lord God must certainly save them all. The moment of their wholesale destruction was however approaching.

Nakkirar gave his miserable comrades confidence, and began his inspired songs in praise of his dearest God, Lord Shanmukha. This famous literary piece of exquisite Tamil poetry is even today read with avidity by devotees and is called *Tirumurugatruppada*. The songs pregnant with keen devotion and passionate adoration of the great qualities of the six-faced God moved all Heaven and moved deeply the divine heart of God Himself.

And behold: A wonder and a terror! Even as the devil set his foot in the cave, its dark sides shook with the angry pulse of Lord Subrahmanya; and within it there rushed the terrible figure of the six-faced God, with His twelve hands of mighty fists holding His divine weapons; and He danced with the Devil tearing him to pieces. He released the 1000 devotees, the 999 blessing and praising the glory of Nakkirar, and all singing the infinite glory of the six-faced God.

The poem sung by Nakkirar glorifying the Lilas of Lord Skanda, known as *Tirumurugatruppada*, is an eloquent exhortation to suffering humanity to devote themselves to the worship of the Lord who dwells in the hearts of all.

5. Kachiyappa Sivachariar

Kachiyappa Sivachariar was a very fortunate Bhakta of Sri Subrahmanya. He lived at Kanjeevaram 1100 years ago. He mastered all learning before his 10th year, and the Sivagamas were his special study.

Lord Shanmukha one day appeared to him in dream and ordered, “My boy, thou shalt sing a Tamil work and call it *Kandapurana*, translating matter from the Sanskrit work, Sankara Samhita, and having for your first line, ‘*Tigadachakkara-chemmukha-maindullan*’.” He awoke and thought over this wonder, and thought over and over again, the kind commission accorded to him by his Lord. He took up the task and finished it suitably. When for recognition it was read before an assemblage of Pandits, some questioned his interpretation of the first line, God-given. Then Lord God Himself inspired one and stated that the grammar for it could be found in *Virasolliyam*, a very ancient Tamil work. All wondered at this divine favour and declared the work authoritative.

6. Pakalli Koottar

Here is a unique instance of a Vaishnava by birth becoming a devotee of Lord Subrahmanya. He lived in Chaturveda Mangalam some century ago. He suffered from the most excruciating pains of stomach ache, and spent anything and prayed to any god but found no relief. After all, he prayed to the Lord of Tiruchendur and got miraculous cure.

He soon went to Tiruchendur to pay homage to Sri Subrahmanya for the great relief He had given him. He stayed there for sometime. He showed his grateful prayer in the form of one of the most inimitable pieces of literary devotion, called Pillai Tamil. The scholars assembled in the temple for hearing it and exclaimed it to be the finest in existence. Even now they recite it in the holy service at Tiruchendur every day. But, though his production was applauded unanimously, they did not accord to him due honours from the temple, Lord God was far more important for Pakalli Koottar than all these penny-a-wise consideration of human honours; and so, he went home without any sort of perturbation caused to his mind. Lord Subrahmanya is however no partisan of this sort of learned men who honoured not Pakalli Koottar for his being born a Vaishnava; and He wanted to teach these people a lesson severely. So it was that night! Lord God took a costly jewel which the priests had placed over His bosom and transferred it to the bosom of His Vaishnava Bhakta; for, was it not from that part of the Bhakta’s body that those ecstatic songs of Divine praise bubbled forth, which they enjoy even today? The authorities, who discovered the loss in the temple the next morning, searched round for the thief; but when they came and beheld Pakalli Koottar

jewelled with the Grace of God, they were taken aback; and soon they knew from the previous day's experiences that they had sinned against God Himself in not according to this sage due honours in the temple. They begged him pardon, and placing him in a stately palanquin bore him in grand procession round the village, proclaiming the glory of Sri Shanmukha and the greatness of the Sage's devotion.

7. Murugammaiyar

Murugammaiyar, a lady devotee of Lord Subrahmanya, was born in South India. She was married to a young and rich man of her own caste. Even from her early days she showed an intense love to Lord Muruga. And it was for this reason that she was called Murugammaiyar. No mendicant or beggar who passed her door would fail to receive the munificent help rendered by the lady Bhakta.

The ways of Murugammaiyar did not suit her husband, who was rather a man of the religion of the flesh. His rebukes and punishments to prevent his wife from doing acts of piety had no effect. On the contrary, they increased and developed further the faith of Murugammaiyar in Lord Shanmukha. Worse still, the husband began to suspect the chastity of his wife as she was so much given to charitable acts and mixing freely with the wandering Sadhus.

One day it so happened that, being enraged much at the behaviour of his impertinent wife and instigated by his own worldly-minded brothers, the husband took a knife and cut off the hands of Murugammaiyar. But the dear Lord, for whose sake she had foregone even the love of her husband, could not brook the sight. The Lord appeared on the scene, restored the hands that had been cut off and revealed unto the world and her husband the intensity of her devotion to Him. He showered His graces on her and blessed the couple with a long and happy life of peace and plenty.

8. Arunagirinathar

This famous devotee lived in Tiruvannamalai about 500 years ago and belonged to Devadasi caste. There is indeed something unique in this case. For, Sri Shanmukha's blessings had to blossom here not merely in a barren soil but one in which we find worst conditions, inimical to any divine prospect. In such cases, none but lazy scholars can find any difficulty of compromise and would say that Bhagavan's grace bestowed on such people as Arunagiri would mean a license as it were (if not a wanton sanction) for people behaving in worst manners and getting the grace of God completely. This biography illustrates that howsoever a man's life be dissipated in early years, if there is a small nucleus of divine love serving as substratum, there can occur a sudden outburst of divine passion and sacrifice, which sages could envy and yet not get by years of Tapas!

So, the early life of Arunagiri was one of reckless debauchery and vile corruption so that even his flesh soon became corroded and diseased with venereal affections. By the wish of her mother who died in his early life, his sister would not say anything against the wishes of her brother and would give everything and anything for him and his ways. Having spent all that she possessed, she (as her caste permitted it) would sell her flesh to those who sought with her the pleasures of sex for the sake of earning the wherewithal for her brother. Even this resource was exhausted; for she became uninteresting to her paramours. She was utterly helpless.

But Arunagiriar took no lesson either from his own physical decline and disease or from the privations of his sister, whom he always worried. Lo, one day, he beseeched her once again and said, “You must send me today with so much. Else I shall sink at your very gates.” No persuasions could prevail; he must have his way. Poor woman, what could she do! She grew desperate, and yet would not displease him. She rushed into saying, “Brother, all this does not convince you; your love for woman’s pleasures is so keen and intense that you think you must have them still. Look here! our caste is intended for affording pleasures of this sort to men of privileged classes, who cannot obtain them otherwise legitimately. Though we are born of the same mother, our fathers are different. So, as I am unable to give you anything at all now, I who was helping you all these years without seeing the means we have got, with me, you can find the pleasures you seek! Brother, I find no other solution for the difficulty!” She would add; but her grief choked her voice. All this terrible speech poured through Arunagiri’s ears like molten lead and shook the very foundations of his being; and in a moment he came to the sense of his life’s iliad of mistakes. So moved and fundamentally shaken he became that he suddenly rushed away from her side, climbed the top of the temple tower, and dropped himself down to dash his mortal life to end, as a sacrifice for all his misdeeds!

Attempt is half-deed. Here it is more than attempt. Arunagiri verily fell from the tower top, and topsy-turvy his body was hurling down. Behold! Lord Subrahmanya, Whom he loved more than he loved other gods and more than others loved Him, and Whom he preferred before all gods as a young “Yogi,” bore him in His hands from below! The Lord spoke, “Arunagiri, how can’st thou do like this, which is not meet for thee! The good of thy past Karma has saved thee now. Take this Kaumara Shadakshara (a Mantra dedicated to Sri Subrahmanya). Go and sing the glory of Lord God, and spread My fame throughout the world, far and wide.” Until that figure which saved him and delivered the message melted away before his very eyes, he took him to be a mere human “Yogi”.

The great soul,—great now because of the privilege described above,—soon began to do the sacred commission of the Lord. He visited many places and sang many songs. But it is worth noticing that while all other saints devoted songs to many gods, Arunagiriar knew none but Lord Sri Shanmukha, and all his wealth of inspiration was utilised for His glorification alone.

The famous verses of Arunagiri are the *Tiruppugazh* songs. He has given 16,000 Tiruppugazh songs, though about 1,300 only are now available. His other works are *Kandar Anubhuti*, *Kandar Alankaram*, etc., which are all sung with great devotion and fervour throughout South India even today.

9. Kumaragurupara Swamigal

He lived about 350 years ago in Srivaikuntham (Tirunelvely District), and was dumb even as a child. Anxious to find their son come to speech somehow, his parents went to the famous Kshetra of Lord Subrahmanya, called Tiruchendur in the same district, and lived there for several months praying and petitioning, and hoped that their son by divine grace would become all right. Months passed, but in vain; prayers and petitions went forth, but all in vain. Broken-hearted, the miserable parents one night determined to end their life by drowning themselves in the sacred tank nearby. But Lord God, (who knew this, for nothing could be hid from His view) that very night

woke up the dumb boy and wrote in his tongue His own *Shadakshara*, and giving him His full Darshan said, "Child, come away to our Shrine even for Viswarupa Darshana, quite early in the morning." With the approach of the dawn, the parents approached the child, but to their wonder and surprise found him graphically describing to them his strange experiences of the night and found in him a power of speech which any well-trained scholar could envy. The boy soon became a famous saint and devotee and gave many inspired songs in praise of Isvara and particularly of Lord Subrahmanya.

He sang the famous *Kandar Kalivenba* in praise of Lord Skanda. At Madurai, he sang verses in praise of Goddess Meenakshi who appeared in person and garlanded the saint with a pearl necklace. He was initiated into the saintly order of Dharmapuram Adhinam. After visiting many holy places in South India and giving a number of Tamil works in verses, he visited Varanasi. He rode on a lion to interview the Badsha of Benares, who was deeply impressed by the greatness of the Swamigal and helped the saint to erect Kedareshwar Temple and Kedarghat on the banks of the Ganga at Varanasi.

10. Alagumuttu Pulaxar

This most blessed Bhakta lived about 200 years ago. He was an accountant in a Subrahmanya temple at Nagai. He was in the habit of taking no food at all in the nighttime except some Prasad from the temple. Due to the day's unusual labour and toil, one night he slept very soundly amid the *Vahanas* of the temple. After the Ardhajama duties of the temple were over, the priests and other authorities called for Alagumuttu; but Alagumuttu did not come forth, his sleep being so deep and unmovable. Taking him to be absent, they left the temple locking the doors safely.

At dead of night, when all was still and silent he woke up and saw none to his utter dismay. His hunger pinched him unusually severely. He appealed to God Subrahmanya for his helplessness and Lord God appeared in the form of a pious priest of the temple, and patting him on his back, said, "What is the matter, Alagumuttu?" He got up and asked for food; for his hunger knew no limit. Immediately Heaven-ordered, heavenly made (and yet Alagumuttu knowing naught of all that), the most dainty food and refreshing drink were given to the fortunate Bhakta. Blessed Alagumuttu ate of it and drank of it; and because it was from Heaven, it could not only allay the pangs of his flesh but burn away all Purvakarmas, as fire burns away a small piece of cotton. Full of divine lustre, he stood pure and perfect, pleasing to the Most High.

Then the priest-God or God-priest told him, "Alagumuttu, sing some songs in praise of our Lord." And thus answered the would-be sage, "Sire, what doest thou mean? When there is no smell of education in me, what can I sing, and how?" Behold the change now all on a sudden! He Who ere now was a simple priest before Alagumuttu, Whom he took to be no more than a human priest appeared now in His native divine majesty, with six faces, twelve hands and all divine halo and paraphernalia, and spake, "I am the holder of the divine Trident (Trisula); I am Shanmukha whom you worship. Sing them; and sing thou shalt." It was no dream for all that; for Alagumuttu was fully awake. All his body was bristling with the in-flood of divine inspiration, his mind getting fully drunk in the depths of divine wisdom and learning. Alagumuttu stands full of expression and power, pouring forth the most wonderful songs in praise of Shanmukha. When the priests and the

authorities of the temple and innumerable Bhaktas were there the next morning opening the doors, they were beside themselves to behold the miracles of Alagumuttu flooding the temple atmosphere with the inspiration of his ecstatic songs.

From this time Alagumuttu was known as a very great saint. His last days were as miraculous as this event. For, returning from his long and varied pilgrimage, he stayed near Shiyali, and while meditating on Sri Shanmukha gave up his mortal body. His admirers were wondering at this *here*. Simultaneously, at his own place, at the temple of Lord Subrahmanya in which he was for long years serving, priests and others were seeing the vision of Alagumuttu rushing post haste into the shrine. They did not dare to interfere with this monarch, but in awe kept aloof, simply expecting Alagumuttu to return from inside; but Alagumuttu did not return. For, he rushed in not to return, but to mingle in the Lord whom he loved so much. It was therefore the holy ghost of Alagumuttu that the priests saw! He left the flesh there, and mingled in the Lord *here*.

May the blessings of the Saints of Lord Shanmukha be upon you all!

SECTION FIVE

MOST IMPORTANT TEMPLES OF LORD SKANDA

STHALA MAHIMA

I

Lord Shanmukha, the Light of lights and the innermost Self of all, is worshipped in the form of God having six faces and twelve hands. Worship of Lord Skanda is most prevalent in South India. Temples of Lord Subrahmanya can be seen throughout South India. Places of natural beauty that soothe the soul enshrine the Almighty in the form of Lord Subrahmanya. Of the places where the temples of Lord Skanda are to be seen, a few are very famous. Each of these temples has a legend and history of its own.

The most famous of these temples have been described very elaborately in Tamil Scriptures. They are Thirupparankundram, Thiruchendur, Palani, Swami Malai, Thiruttani and Pazhamuthirsolai (Azhagar Koil).

1. Thirupparankundram

Thirupparankundram, a railway station in South India, is situated on the way from Madurai to Trivandrum. It is about 4 miles from the town of Madurai.

The temple is built on a hillock. The Puranas relate the following story about the place.

After the fall of Surapadma and his Asura followers, Lord Skanda, with the Devas, moved from Tiruchendur to Thirupparankundram. Here, at the request of Indra, Lord Skanda's marriage

with Deivayanai (daughter of Indra) took place. It is here that the six sons of Parasara Muni got redemption from the curse of remaining as fishes. By the grace of Lord Skanda the sons of the sage assumed their original human form.

2. Thiruchendur

Thiruchendur is situated on the southern seashore, about 35 miles from Tirunelveli. According to the Puranas, Lord Skanda with his army of Devas had his Base Camp pitched at Thiruchendur. From here he sent his messenger Veerabahu Devar to Surapadma at his capital, Veera Mahendrapuri. After vanquishing Surapadma, the Lord returned to Thiruchendur and settled down there. The festival of Skanda Shashthi is celebrated in this temple with great éclat. Many devotees of Lord Skanda stay in the temple during the six days, observing the six days Skanda Shashthi Vrata with great faith and austerity.

3. Palani Hills

Next comes Palani, another famous place of pilgrimage, where the temple of Lord Skanda is built on the top of a hill. The station itself, Palani by name, is about 20 miles from Dindigul junction, which is on the Southern Railway, between Thiruchirapally and Madurai. A view from the top of the Hill will at once elevate the minds of pilgrims who approach the Lord with faith and love. In the Puranas the story of this place is narrated as follows:

When Lord Skanda and Lord Ganesha were at Kailasa with their Father and Mother, Narada brought a fruit and offered it to Lord Siva. Now, Lord Siva made an offer to His sons to give the fruit to the one who would go round the whole world and return first. At this, Lord Skanda, riding on his Peacock-Vahana, flew round the world and came back to Kailasa anxious to win the prize offered by his Father. But to his great disappointment, when he approached his Father after his round-the-globe flight, he saw the much coveted fruit in the hands of Lord Ganesha, who was calmly eating it, with a mischievous extra relish.

To add injury to insult, Lord Ganesha laughed at the grand flight of his brother. Skanda enquired of his Father and Mother how Ganesha, who was unable to move about due to his pot-belly, could go round the world as he had done and win the race from him. The parents replied that Ganesha, taking his parents (Lord Siva and Parvati) as the world, had come around them and won the prize. Ganesha explained how the whole world was nothing but their dear Father and Mother in whom everything existed. Thrown into a rage by all this, Lord Skanda threw away all his decorations and, clad only in a *Kaupeena* and with a stick in his hand, left Kailasa in a huff.

It is told in the Purana that, after travelling for a long time, he settled down on the top of a hill now known as Palani. To pacify their son, Lord Siva and Parvati, with the other Devas, came over to Palani Hills and glorified him. Parvati Devi informed Skanda that, he being himself the sweetest of the sweet fruits to them, there was no reason for him to get annoyed over an ordinary fruit. Pacified by the sweet and winning words of his Mother, Lord Skanda returned along with them to Kailasa.

The temple has also got another significance—of having been the abode of the Great Siddhas of South India. It was one amongst them, Bohar by name, a devotee of Skanda, that had made the image of Skanda now worshipped there, out of *Nava Pashanas*.

4. Swami Malai

Swami Malai is the name of a hill near the town of Kumbakonam, in South India. It is about 200 miles south of Madras, on the Madras-Thiruchirappally main line. The Sthala Mahima of this temple is as follows:

When Brahma was imprisoned by Skanda, Lord Siva approached His son and asked him to release Brahma. After Brahma was released, Siva, Himself desirous of hearing about the significance of Pranava, came to this place Skanda as a Guru imparted unto his Father, who, as a disciple, heard the secret discourse, the Pranava Rahasya. Hence the Lord of this place is known by the name of Swaminathan or Sivagurunathan, the Guru of Lord Siva.

5. Kundruthoradal

Mountains and Valleys even today present a charming and pleasant scenery by which the human mind gets delighted and inspired. As the landscape abounds with natural beauties unsullied by human habitation, these mountains and dales are resorted to for gaining peace and calmness of mind and also for health. Such being the case, it is no wonder that the creator of these natural surroundings is enshrined in temples in such places. Everything that is of eternal beauty is a thing of everlasting joy. Thus the ancients have enshrined the Lord in temples on the top of such hills; Thiruthanigai is one of the most famous. It is in South India, about 40 miles East of Madras, on the Madras-Renigunta line. It is told in the Puranas that Lord Skanda, after the war with the Asuras, settled down in Thiruthanigai Hill with his consorts Valli and Deivayanai. The temple is situated upon a hill with a beautiful landscape around it.

6. Palamuthirsolai

Mother Nature expresses herself in all her beauty in places abounding in hills and dales decked with various wild flowers. As worship of Skanda was to commemorate the worship of Nature and its Creator, the Almighty, one can find temples of Skanda in every dale, valley and plain which abound in gardens and brooks. Amongst such places, Ilanchi, a place in South India near the Curtallam water falls and three miles from Shencottah, and Alagar Koil, a place some 10 miles East of Madurai, are famous for Skanda worship.

7. Achaleswar

In the Punjab, near Batala, there is a temple called Achaleswar. The story of this place is that, when Lord Skanda was coming around the world on His peacock for getting the fruit, he alighted at this place to rest for a while, when on hearing that Ganesha had already won the prize, remained there without proceeding further.

8. Kathirkamam

In the south of Sri Lanka, there is a place called Kathirkamam which enshrines a temple of Subrahmanya. According to the Skanda Purana, this is the place commemorating the *Emakudam* or the Base Camp of Lord Skanda, which he had pitched upon the outskirts of the capital of Surapadma, Veeramahendrapuri. And it is said that it is the place where the form of Lord Subrahmanya attained Oneness with Lord Siva in the form of a Jyotis or Light.

Other important places of worship are Thirupporur, a coastal town 30 miles off Madras; Vayalur, near Thiruchirapally; Thiruvannamalai, and Udipi in the west Coast of South India, near Mangalore.

May the blessings of Lord Subrahmanya be upon you all!

II

1. Tiruchendur

This in the Tirunelvely District
Is a famous temple
Of Lord Subrahmanya,
The Perfect Master of all.

O Lord Karttikeya!
Consort of Valli, Deivayanai!
Prostrations unto Thee,
Let thy 'Vel' protect me.

You killed the Asuras:
Surapadma and Tarakasura
In fair and open combat
In days of yore.

This is not much;
Show thy strength now
In killing the Asuras
Now ruling my inner world!

Lust, anger and greed,
The cruel sons of Ego,
Are tormenting thy devotee
Om Saravanabhavaya Namah!

2. Palani

O Lord of Palani Hill!
O Dandayudha Pani!
O Karttikeya, O Muruga!
Salutations unto Thee.

Thou art the younger brother of Ganesha.
The six Kritika Devis nursed you
Thus are you named Karttikeya.
Thou art Nirguna Brahman.
Thou art Siva's sparks of Light Divine,
Thou art the great General
Of Celestial forces,
Thou art the Destroyer
Of Tarakasura and Simhamukha.
Surapadma became Thy vehicle and flag.

Come, O come, Lord Subrahmanya
You blessed Arunagiri.
Now Bless me, O Skanda,
I am Thine, all is Thine my Lord!

3. Thiruthani

It is near Tirupati
That this Skanda temple stands.
O General of Devas' forces!
O Destroyer of evil!
O Karttikeya, Siva's Son,
The six sparks from Sankara's fire!
O God of War!
Salutations unto Thee.

When Thy Mother Parvati
Embraced the six babies,
You assumed one body
And six heads.

Thou art the power of Wisdom,
Mercy, Truth and Good.
All powers of mankind
Are naught without thy Mercy.
Saravanabhava Pahi Mam
Karttikeya Raksha Mam

4. Swami Malai

Very near to Kumbakonam
There is a famous temple
Of Lord Subrahmanya,
Swami Malai by name.

This is the Upadesa Sthala
Where Lord Subrahmanya became
The Guru of Lord Siva,
By expounding Omkara
Or the sacred Pranava
Into Siva's willing ears.

O holder of the 'Vel' of Power
O Velayudha! Velmuruga!
Thy 'Vel' and Hari's discus are one;
Thy 'Vel' is the granter of boons.
Salutations unto Thee
And Thy mighty 'Vel'
Om Saravanabhavaya Namah.

5. Kathirkamam

Kathirkama is in Sri Lanka.
It is a Subrahmanya Kshetra,
Where the Manicka Ganga flows.
The Priest is a Singalese.

No One has seen what is inside;
There are seven screens.
The deity is a powerful one!
He gives Adesha to all sincere devotees,
If they remain there for three days.
Maunds of camphor are burnt
During Skanda Shashthi.

Save me, protect me.
Haro Hara, Haro Hara;
Haro Hara, Haro Hara.

SECTION SIX

SKANDA SHASHTHI MESSAGES

1945

Children of Immortality!

Hindu festivals and celebrations have more in them than meets the eye. In fact, Hinduism, the cradle of all the religions of the world, presents us with a Divine Kaleidoscope: Spiritual Truths, ideas and ideals are expressed in an impressive, easily assimilable and striking manner, capable of being looked at from different angles according to the differences in temperament and taste between man and man, affording withal equal opportunities of drawing inspiration from it to one and all.

In the eyes of the Lord, even the oldest amongst us is but a child. What is a hundred years or even more for one who is Eternity itself, for whom thousands of human years would pass in a mere winking of the eye? Yet, look at His compassion for us! He directs the Drama of Life here in such a way that everything that happens all about us has, besides the momentary entertainment that it offers us, bears in its bosom great lessons which would be invaluable aids in our march to Immortality. I have in mind the Puranas specially, when I say this. All the stories related therein are true. They are inspiring, elevating and interesting; they contain object lessons for us to learn and profit by. Read them again and again with zeal, faith and an open mind; you will soon cross this Samsara.

The Skanda Purana describes the glorious deeds of Lord Subrahmanya. The Lord is an Avatara of Lord Siva necessitated by the miserable plight in which the Devas found themselves in their encounter with the Asuras. Lord Murugan assumed the role of the Commanding General of the Deva Army and easily conquered the Demons with the help of His *Vel*.

The Puranic demons are mere nobodies in strength and valour when compared to the anti-Adhyatmic ones which an aspirant has to encounter every day and every second of his spiritual life. Who but he who has resorted to the Lord for succour and who has surrendered himself at His Lotus-Feet can conquer passion, anger, greed and their diabolic comrades?

Lord Skanda's grace is easily obtained. Saint Arunagiri says in his soul-stirring *Tiruppugazh* songs that even if the word MURUGA is uttered but once with Bhava, the Lord's Grace descends on the devotee. Once the aspirant obtains the Lord's Grace, the Demons take to their heels; and he is at once admitted into the realms of Immortality and Eternal Bliss.

Pray to Him fervently with faith and devotion. You will very soon cross this vast ocean of Samsara. Subrahmanya is the Pratyaksha Devata (visible God) of this Kali Yuga. Worship of Him bestows instant fruits on the devotee. It is a very rare privilege to take part in the Laksharchana celebrations. The Lord's Names are very, very powerful. Their utterance or listening to them will destroy sins committed in all one's countless births.

May the Grace of Lord Skanda be upon you all!

1946

Beloved Immortal Selves!

Skanda Shasthi is the six-day-worship of Lord Skanda or Karttikeya. He is the spiritual son of Lord Siva. Lord Skanda is worshipped with intense devotion by a very large section of people throughout Southern India and Sri Lanka as well.

The origin of Lord Skanda, the purpose of His Avatara and its significance are of much importance to all seekers after Truth. During the battle between the Asuras and the Devas, the latter were defeated several times by the former. The Devas were unable to resist the onslaught of the Asuric forces. Then, in despair, they approached Lord Siva and entreated Him to give them an able Leader under whose heroic lead they might obtain victory over the Asuras. They surrendered themselves completely and prayed to Lord Siva sincerely. The gracious Lord granted their request by creating the Mighty Divine Warrior, Lord Skanda, out of His Divine Power or Achintya Sakti. This great son of Lord Siva at once assumed leadership of the celestial forces, originated them, inspired them and attacked the Asuric forces. The Asuras were routed and a glorious victory was gained by the Devas. Thus it was through the able guidance and leadership of Lord Skanda that the Divine forces obtained victory over the demoniacal.

The inner life of the spiritual aspirant is precisely such a constant struggle between the divine and the demoniacal aspects in him. The seeker's Sadhana is this determined battle against the Asuric forces that try to drag him down into deeper darkness and take him away from his ideal. At times he becomes so totally helpless under the violent attacks of his lower nature that it seems as if all hope of progress is doomed to failure. He feels that he has fallen, never to rise again. But, let all Sadhakas take heart that the compassion and grace of the Divine Lord is never-failing. It will never let you down. '*Nil desperandum*' should be your guiding motto, for, the eternal law is "darkness cannot stand before light." Make a whole-hearted surrender at the feet of the Divine even as the Devas surrendered to Lord Siva. And like them pray earnestly with *Bhava* and sincerity. The divine help will surely come, and in your heart there will spring up the routing torrent of Divine Sakti. The Lord's grace will become manifest to you in the form of inner Soul-force. This power is the Skanda manifest in inner being to aid in your battle against the lower Asuric self with its devilish minions like passion, anger, greed, jealousy, falsehood, deceit, cruelty and thousand other aspects of evil. No more are you helpless! The descent of the Divine Grace with this Atma Bala, with this Skanda Sakti, will vanquish all the undivine forces that attack you on the spiritual path and emerge triumphant and victorious. You achieve your life's goal.

Therefore Lord Karttikeya is the very embodiment of the Divine Grace. He is the personification of the *Daya Sakti*, or *Kripa Sakti* of the Lord. The grace of the compassionate Lord, when prayerfully and sincerely invoked, manifests as such irresistible Divine Power that all Asuric forces fly away in holy terror at its mere approach. The Lord's Grace is the ultimate resort and unfailing support in the inner warfare of everyone's spiritual life, of all struggles. The significance and the spiritual message embodied in Skanda Avatara is the message of Supreme importance of self-surrender, the Supreme efficacy of sincere prayer and the unfailing compassion of the Lord. If

you truly surrender yourself to the Lord with Bhava, He will at once shower His Grace upon you. No real prayer from the bottom of your heart will remain unanswered. If you obtain the Lord's grace, you will certainly succeed and overcome all obstacles and annihilate the force of darkness, that stand against you. There is no force that can stand against the Supreme Power of Divine Grace.

Take shelter at the Lord's feet Pray to Him earnestly and invoke His aid and obtain His grace and compassion. Emerge triumphant and victorious. Attain the lofty and glorious spiritual state of freedom, perfection and bliss. Upon this joyous occasion of Skanda Shashthi, when you are all celebrating the victory of the Lord over the demon, Tarakasura, the powerful leader of the Asuras, remember these great truths and be courageous. Surrender yourself afresh at His feet.

May the glorious Lord, Skanda, inspire you all and infuse in you with inner spiritual strength! May He lead you all to victorious triumph against the demons of nescience and worldliness!!

May He bless you all!!!

1947

Priya Atman,

It gives me immense delight to send this Message on such an auspicious occasion, the Pratishtha Ceremony of Sri Balasubrahmanya and Sakti Vel.

“Even if, Muruga, Thy Name once told,
Your grace descends with Love manifold
Let me Thy Name Muruga, Parama Kumara, once repeat,
And Thy grace to protect shall descend on me.”

So prayed the Saint Arunagiri in his famous soul-elevating *Tiruppugazh* songs. Mark the Bhava which inspired him to utter these verses. Lord wants only your heart. Give unto Him your heart. Develop immense love to Him. Thirst for His Darshan. You will attain Him.

Lord Subrahmanya is an Avatara of Lord Siva. All incarnations are manifestations of the Lord. The Lord manifests Himself from time to time in various names and forms for establishing Dharma and punishing the wicked. Lord Muruga is the *Pratyaksha Devata* in this Kali Yuga. His wives, Valli and Deivayanai, represent the *Iccha Sakti* and *Kriya Sakti* of the Lord. His *Velayudha* (Divine Weapon—the Spear) represents *Jnana Sakti*. His six heads represent the six attributes of Jnana, Vairagya, Bala, Kirti, Sri and Aiswarya. They denote that He is the Virat Purusha, the all-pervading.

Of the eighteen Puranas, the Skanda Purana alone deals with the Avatara and Lilas of Lord Subrahmanya. He is much worshipped in South India. The famous Temples of Lord Subrahmanya in South India, are Tiruchendur, Palani, Thirupparankundram, Swamimalai, Thiruthanigai, Thiruppurur, Udipi, Alagar Koil; and almost all hillocks in South India especially in Tamil Nadu, shine with a temple of Lord Subrahmanya on their tops.

Nakkirar, a famous Tamil poet of the Tamil Sangam Age, was a great votary of Lord Muruga. He composed the poem called *Tirumurugatrupadai* and whoever repeats the whole of this verse with Bhava and faith will attain peace and prosperity, and success in all his undertakings.

Kumaragurupara Swamigal of Srivaikuntham, was another devotee and Bhakta of Lord Subrahmanya. He had been a dumb child till he was five years old; and, by the grace of the Lord, was gifted with all talents and became later on a famous saint. His songs, *Tiruchendur Kali Venba* and others are repeated by devotees of Lord Shanmukha with Bhava and faith, even today.

Saint Arunagirinathar is the author of the famous *Thiruppugazh* songs, *Skandar Anubhuti*, etc. His songs are in praise of Lord Shanmukha, and are highly inspiring. He had direct Darshan of Lord Subrahmanya. Regular and systematic Parayana of these songs is sufficient for the struggling souls to get solace, peace and prosperity.

Follow the footsteps of these saints. Lead a life of simplicity. Have purity. Develop magnanimity. Cultivate nobility. Practise serenity. Draw inspiration from these Bhaktas. Entertain sublime thoughts, cultivate virtues and be kind to all. Become humble. Take refuge in God. Sing God's Names. See His indwelling presence in all. Serve everyone with intense Love. Service is worship. Serve. Love. Give. Taste the Nectar of Immortality and enjoy the highest Peace and Bliss.

Practice of the Presence of God always is the easiest, nearest and surest way for attaining God-realisation. Everyday is a fresh opportunity given to you by God to go nearer to Him. Shed the precious tears of Divine Prema when you are alone and don't make a mere show.

May the blessings of Arunagirinathar and other Bhaktas of Shanmukha be upon you all! May the Divine Hand guide you in all your activities! May the *Vel* guide you to the realm of Peace, Plenty, Prosperity and Enlightenment!

Lord Skanda—The Concentrated Divine Energy*

(Sri Swami Krishnananda)

In the history of language and literature, the most outstanding works are the Epics of the various nations. The superb literary productions of Greece are the writings of Homer,—the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey*. In Italy, similar Epics were produced by Dante and Virgil,—Dante's "Divine Comedy" and Virgil's "Aeneid". In English literature, the best Epic examples are Milton's poems and Shakespeare's plays. In India, we have the *Itihasas* and also the *Puranas*. Here, in this type of poetry and expression, the soul rises to the maximum of its virility and portrays in the most majestic manner the picture of creation. The intention of these poets, whether of the West or of the East, is to describe in soulful language and in picturesque style, the processes of creation, the comedy and the tragedy of evolution and involution, the story of the life of man which is painted sometimes with the optimistic colours of comedy and sometimes with the pessimistic ones of tragedy. Life is both, and

* Skanda-Sashthi Message on the 9th of November, 1980.

it can be pictured from two different angles of vision. The central motif of all the Epics of the world hinges upon a conflict which gets resolved in the end. Somehow, the feature of a clash between forces seems to have caught the vision of the poets and the adepts as the pivotal point of their observations. When a careful attention is paid to the processes of nature and the history of human life, one observes that nature outwardly and man inwardly have to confront situations which can be best described as a series of conflicts. Every day is a conflict before us, an opposition, a confrontation and a question which demands an answer. Our struggles throughout the days and the nights of our life are our attempts to answer the question of life which is the great enigma or mystery. Life poses a problem which man has not succeeded in solving with all his intellectual endowments. The deeper vision of life, which you may call philosophical or mystical, spiritual or religious, has revealed the basic or the foundational features of creation as a movement towards and a movement away from a Centre. This seems to be the secret behind and an answer to all the questions of life. There is a Centre somewhere towards which everything seems to be gravitating and which at the same time seems to be repelling everything. This simultaneous feeling of the pull and the repulsion is the conflict. This is at the basis of all problems.

The Epic language describes this dual warfare of the pull and the repulsion as the battle between the divine and the undivine powers. The divine forces are those factors, impulses and aspirations which urge everything towards the Centre, and the undivine ones are the opposite ones which compel everything to be driven away from the Centre. There is this double urge in man, in everything and in all Nature, nay in the whole of creation. Everything seems to be moving in two directions at the same time, an impossibility to understand and explain. How can one thing move in two directions at the same time! This exactly is the mystery of life. We are 'impulsive' towards two different directions. 'Impulsive' is the only-word, because it is an irresistible urge or desire that we feel within ourselves, to do two things at the same time. Nothing can be worse than this situation, because it is an impulsion towards an impossibility. No one can do two contrary things at the same time and one cannot have a conflicting desire operating at the same time in one's own mind. But this is what is happening. If this did not happen, we would not have been what we are today. Man exists because of the existence of this conflict in his own mind pulling him in two different ways—one urge moving in one direction and another in another direction. So man is divine and also undivine at the same time. We have a divine aspiration beckoning us towards the Centre, though it is invisible to our eyes. There is also in us an equally powerful urge, perhaps, which drives us outward towards the objects of senses, in the direction of the activities of life, forcing us to entangle ourselves in the social norms and the calls of life. Which is unimportant—the calls of life, or the aspirations which we regard as religious and uplifting? Actually, it is the expression of a single impulse in two different directions. This is a cosmical impulse and also a psychological one. The whole Nature feels this impulse, the whole universe is filled with it and each one of us is also full with it.

The Epics and the Puranas, the great heroic poems, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Puranas, or for that matter, Milton's 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained', whatever be the name that you give to these Epic approaches, all these are enrapturing, poetic exclamations of moments of rapture, when there was a flash of insight from the bottom of the soul of the poet concerned. These are the poems which we call the Epics, and this is why we are moved when we read them. Our hairs stand on end, our emotions begin to be in a state of turmoil and we begin to tremble and shake, and we are forced to assume the role of the personalities portrayed in the Epics. We begin to move with those specimens of individuality which the Epic poems describe. That is the

power of the poet. The greater is the force of poetry, the more also we feel impelled to move with the individualities described therein, and we become those individuals for the time being. We laugh and weep, we feel happy and we are sunk in grief, as we move with the heroes and the heroines of these majestic Epics.

We have in India two great Epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and also eighteen Puranas, each one touching upon one aspect of this universal activity going on in the form of evolution and involution, the warfare between the divine and the undivine forces. There is a perpetual conflict between god and devil, as the theologians sometimes tell us. The ruling divinity of the universe and the forces of darkness fight with each other. A noble and sublime instance of this Epic event that is supposed to have taken place aeons back in the history of the cosmos, is the *Skanda Shashthi* Festival, which is observed for six days and which concludes and consummates on the sixth day, dedicated to Lord Skanda. The great hero of this cosmic drama which is described in the *Skanda Purana*, and in certain other scriptures like the *Mahabharata*, is Skanda, the great War-God of India. Oftentimes, westerners compare Him with Mars, the Generalissimo of the celestials, the angels in heaven. In the *Bhagavadgita*, Lord Krishna, the spokesman of the great poem, identifies Himself with Skanda among the generals—“*Senaninam-aham Skandah.*”

The religious history of this event commences with a magnificent portrayal of the great God Siva absorbed in meditation and deeply immersed in Samadhi, oblivious of what we may call darkness, evil or the centrifugal forces. God’s absorption in Himself in the ‘I am that I am’ is the total cosmic opposition to the multifarious dark activities of the urges in the direction of the senses whose leader is the ego and whose colleagues are desire and anger. The greatest forms which this impulse of externality can take in us are these three. The ego is the centrality of the urge, the central dynamo, as it were, which pumps the energy necessary for the movement of this impulse outwardly. And, desire and anger are like the two arms of this adamantine centrality of individuals. So, in a way, we may say that there are only two forces, and we may not be wrong when sometimes we say that there are three forces. We have the Supreme Creator and the Satan in the ‘Paradise Lost’ of Milton. We have the description of the Inferno, the Purgetorio and the Paradise in the comedy of Dante. We have Ravana and Kumbhakarna in the *Ramayana*, Duryodhana and Duhsasana in the *Mahabharata*. Mostly they are forms of a dual force, like Sumbha and Nisumbha in the *Devi-Mahatmya*, and Sunda and Upasunda in the *Mahabharata*. They are invincible for all practical purposes.

There cannot be so forceful an energy as desire, anywhere. Desire is the greatest power in the world. Of all the powers, the desire is the strongest, because nothing can move without desire. Hence desire should be regarded as the impulse for any kind of movement, in any direction. The nature of desire is so complex that in a poem called the *Kama Gita*, in the *Mahabharata*, we are told that desire laughs at people who are trying to conquer it. Because, the attempt to conquer desire itself is a desire. This is the reason why it laughs. Sri Krishna sings this *Kama Gita* to illustrate the difficulty of conquering desire of any kind, unless proper means are employed.

Gods were startled, and they were in a state of consternation when the demoniacal forces attacked them. The gods too had their own strength, no doubt. Virtue is supposed to have power to overcome vice. But often we feel that the virtues of the world are incapable of confronting the vices of the nature. It is not enough if we are virtuous. The vices are too strong for us. We have seen with

our own eyes human history, these days. Virtue does not seem to succeed. The gods were virtuous and the demons were vicious. But, the gods could not face them, just as the virtuous ones in this world are unable to defeat the vicious. The virtuous people are suffering and the evil ones are thriving.

What is this mystery? The mystery is not known to many. The truth is that while virtue is generally understood as the opposite of vice, we forget the fact that it is also the counter-correlative of vice. So, it has not got the strength to confront the vice. Vice or evil can be overcome by a power which is transcendent and not merely ethical and moral. The evils of the world are not afraid of mere morality and ethics. Mere goodness will not do. There should be Divinity in our personality, and Divinity is far superior to mere goodness in the form of an ethical behaviour and a moral conduct. Divinity is an integrating force, while virtue is only a counter-correlative of vice. There cannot be virtue unless there is vice. Because, if there is no evil at all, there cannot be any such thing called goodness. But Divinity is a different thing altogether because it transcends both the good and the evil.

So, when the forces of darkness began to assault the angels, the Purana tells us that the forces were threefold. They are named, in the Skanda Purana, as Surapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka; and in the Mahabharata as Duryodhana, Karna and Duhsasana. No one, however virtuous and good he may be, could stand these forces. These demoniacal forces were too much for all the angels put together. The Gods were trembling in fear, just as virtuous men in this world tremble in the presence of the evil dacoits and the unscrupulous thugs, who attack people inwardly as well as outwardly. Virtue seems to have no place in this world. Angels were driven out, the gods ran away from the heaven and evil reigned supreme. What is the solution? Not mere goodness, not mere virtue, not a little charity, not a little sweet speech,—none of these can stand their onslaught. These things will not cut ice in this evil world. Angels are good enough and they are far superior to humans in virtue, in goodness, in knowledge and in everything conceivable. But they could not stand this vicious force. They had to invoke God Himself And I may tell you that the solution for all the evils of the world today is God only and not anything that man can do. Not I, not you, not anyone can solve the mystery of the evils of the world. Unless God is invoked, there is no hope. Lord Siva, the great Master of Yoga who was immersed in Samadhi, the abysmal universality of experience, was the only succour and the source of hope to the Gods and angels, in the war depicted in the Skanda Purana. When this triple force, Surapadma, Simhamukha and Tarakasura, attacked the celestials from all sides, they did not know whom to appeal for help. They ran to Brahma, the Creator. He said: “There is only one solution which is difficult to conceive, but there is no other alternative. The force, the energy, the militant expression of Lord Siva is the only answer to this problem of yours.” When God becomes militant, nobody can stand before Him. When the lion stands up, you know that there can be none who can face it. God always keeps quiet. He is always in a state of Samadhi, as it were. He gives a long rope to everyone and never interferes with anybody’s affairs. You may do anything that you like, you can hang yourself if you like and God is not bothered about it. But, when things become too bad and intolerable, when the whole world begins to cry, these great incarnations take place. If you or I cry individually in a corner, that may not be sufficient to bring down the incarnations. God tolerates when one man cries or two people cry, because many others are happy. But when everyone starts crying, He cannot bear it anymore. This was the condition before the birth of Skanda. The whole world was in a state of travail, turmoil and agitation. The birth of the

War-God, *Kumarasambhava* as Kalidasa puts it, is the story behind this religious festival called Skanda Shashthi.

Without going into the details of the whole story here, I would like to pin-point only the significance of the occasion, viz., the impossibility to confront evil without the help of God, the power of Divinity. No one can face the world except with the help of God. Armaments, military and police are nothing before the evil of the world. No one can overcome it, and it shall continue. So, the Skanda Purana says that the War-God was born from the universal contemplation of the great Creator Himself. The *Samadhi-Bhuta Sakti* or the energy born out of the great Samadhi of Lord Siva, whom we call *Skanda*, is the answer for all the evils of the world. The force of cosmic desire became a cumulative focussing weapon, as it were, and with a sixfold face the divine energy began to confront the multifaceted dark forces. We have a sixfold psyche within us. The central, pivotal feature of it is the ego as I called it, or you can say the mind, which expresses itself as the five senses. The five senses energised by the mind drive us outward in the direction of the objects of the world. You would have heard it said that the occasion for the birth of Skanda or the War-God was the stimulation by the god of Love, who darted his weapons towards the great Siva, who was then in a state of deep absorption, in Samadhi. These mysteries are difficult to understand. Ordinary minds are not made in such a way as to probe into these intricacies of Divine action. The energies that are required to face the evil of creation are potentially present inside us and they have to be worked up by a particular means. Desire is neither good nor bad. But, it can become bad or good according to the circumstances and the way in which it operates, under given conditions, in the history of creation. The birth of Skanda had to be occasioned by the activity of desire personified as *Kama* or Cupid, for the sake of overcoming the evils, one of which is desire itself, whose comrades are anger and other manifestations of egoism. The Bhagavadgita says: “*Dharmaviruddho Bhuteshu Kamosmi.*” Here God refers to Himself as desire, bereft of or free from any contravention of Dharma. Here is a clue to the mystery of how it became necessary for the Gods to employ Cupid as an instrument to rouse the divine desire in Siva for confronting the evil desire of the demons. Desire is like a diamond which cuts itself.

Religious adventure becomes more and more complicated as we proceed along with it further and further. In the earlier stages religion seems to be very simple, because it appears to be merely a question of going to the church or sitting before a deity in a temple or following a system of routine, a ritual, etc. But, when we enter into the heart of religion, it ceases to be any kind of routine of this kind. It becomes an inward adventure of the spirit. It is not a doing of something, but a complete reshuffling of one’s personality and a transformation of oneself through a transvaluation of values, by a process in which we may have to submit to conscription the very same forces in the world which appear as our opponents at present. The world is an enemy and also a friend. The Bhagavadgita, again, gives an answer to this interesting question, ‘how the same thing can be a friend and also an enemy.’ In the sixth chapter, we are told that the Self is the friend and the Self is also the enemy. Desire is a friend and also an enemy. The world is a friend and also an enemy. By means of the instrumentality of *Kamadeva*, the Divine Force of Siva was roused up into action, which is otherwise Omnipresent. In the Vedanta philosophy, a distinction is drawn between two types of consciousness, known as *Sahaja-Jnana* and *Vritti-Jnana*, which can be translated as a universally present impersonal, featureless consciousness and a directly operative consciousness acting in some given way, respectively. Or, to give a grosser example, the impersonal fire which is present in all the five elements around us, is to be distinguished from the concrete fire with which

we cook our meal and light our lamp. Energy in action is the fire that is burning through the cooking stove, and the energy that is merely existing in an impersonal manner is like the fire present in all the five elements. So, the force of Siva was impersonal in the Samadhi state and it had no concern with good or bad, or anything that is taking place anywhere; but when it had to be employed as a weapon to counteract the evils of creation, it had to manifest itself and cannot merely remain as an impersonal featureless Samadhi consciousness. So, the energy burst forth from Siva's third eye which is the power of Knowledge or *Chit-Sakti*. It is not a manipulated energy created through machines or through the energies of any kind of physical body or substance. Only the energy of Wisdom can counteract the evil of creation and not any other power, not anything that we do in the form of charity, goodness or our so-called religiosity.

So we have in this great Epic of Skanda's incarnation, the 'Kumara Sambhava', the mighty portrayal of the adventure of the Spirit through the processes of Sadhana, spiritual practice, wherein, we commune ourselves with the highest power that is conceivable, the energy of God Himself. We have to draw that energy forward and harness it to face this world. Then the power of externality gets transformed into the peace of universality. What happened to the Rakshasas—Surapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka?

Those forces which were externalised and which were the desires impelling themselves outwardly in the direction of sense-objects, were transformed into the universal peace of creation. Peace reigned supreme. There is nothing called destruction anywhere. These demons were not destroyed in the ordinary sense of the term. You know the law of conservation of energy. Energy is never increasing or decreasing in creation, It is only concentrated in different forms and at different places. The concentrated form of it is what we call evil. So the very same energy which was in the form of these demoniacal elements was transformed by the Divine energy, which means to say, all that was impulsive in the direction of externality, space, time, causality and objectivity and desire of every kind, got withdrawn into the peace of the Absolute and the Goal of life was reached. This is, in my humble opinion, the great spiritual significance behind the religious festival called the Skanda Shashthi, which falls on the sixth day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Kartika (October-November)*. There are other meanings which are manifold and interesting. Out of all this variety, I have placed before you one feature for your contemplation.

PART II
APPENDIX—I

॥ स्कन्दोपनिषद् ॥
skandopaniṣad

यत्रासंभवतां याति स्वातिरिक्ताभिदाततिः ।
संविन्मात्रं परं ब्रह्म तत्स्वमात्रं विजृम्भते ॥
ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः ! शान्तिः !! शान्तिः !!!

yatrāsaṃbhavatāṃ yāti svātiriktābhidātatiḥ |
saṃvinmātraṃ paraṃ brahma tatsvamātraṃ vijṛmbhate ||
OM saha nāvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu | saha vīryaṃ karavāvahai |
tejasvi nāvadhītamastu | mā vidviṣāvahai |
OM śāntiḥ ! śāntiḥ !! śāntiḥ !!!

Om! May He protect us both-teacher and pupils; may He enable both of us to enjoy the bliss of Mukti. May we both find out the true meaning of the scriptures. May our studies be fruitful. May there be no dispute!

Om! Peace! Peace!! Peace!!!

अच्युतोऽस्मि महादेव तव कारुण्यलेशतः ।
विज्ञानघन एवास्मि शिवोऽस्मि किमतः परम् ॥ १ ॥
acyuto.asmi mahādeva tava kāruṇyaleśataḥ |
vijñānaghana evāsmi śivo.asmi kimataḥ param || 1 ||

“O Mahadeva (Great Lord)! I am Achyuta (indestructible) on account of an iota of Thy Grace (having been showered on me). I am full of Knowledge; I am Siva (Auspicious)! What more is to be achieved or desired?” (1)

न निजं निजवद्भाति अन्तःकरणजृम्भणात् ।

अन्तःकरणनाशेन संविन्मात्रस्थितौ हरिः ॥ २ ॥

na nijam nijavadbhāti antaḥkaraṇajṛmbhaṇāt |
antaḥkaraṇanāśena saṁvinmātrasthitau hariḥ || 2 ||

संविन्मात्रस्थितश्चाहमजोऽस्मि किमतः परम् ।

व्यतिरिक्तं जडं सर्वं स्वप्नवच्च विनश्यति ॥ ३ ॥

saṁvinmātrasthitaścāhamajo.asmi kimataḥ param |
vyatiriktiṁ jaḍam sarvaṁ svapnavacca vinaśyati || 3 ||

चिज्जडानां तु यो द्रष्टा सोऽच्युतौ ज्ञानविग्रहः ।

स एव हि महादेवः स एव हि महाहरिः ॥ ४ ॥

cijjaḍānāṁ tu yo draṣṭā so.acyutau jñānavigrahaḥ |
sa eva hi mahādevaḥ sa eva hi mahāhariḥ || 4 ||

स एव ज्योतिषां ज्योतिः स एव परमेश्वरः ।

स एव हि परं ब्रह्म तद्ब्रह्माहं न संशयः ॥ ५ ॥

sa eva jyotiṣāṁ jyotiḥ sa eva parameśvaraḥ |
sa eva hi paraṁ brahma tadbrahmāhaṁ na saṁśayaḥ || 5 ||

“Truth does not shine as Truth, owing to the play of the inner instruments, viz., mind, Chitta, Buddhi and Ahankara. (Now) with the destruction of the *Antahkarana* or inner instruments, Hari (God) dwells (in me) as Pure Consciousness. As I am also Pure consciousness, I am without birth. What is nobler than this state?” All inert things (other than the Atman) perish like a dream. He who sees all the inert things as forms of Achyuta (Lord Narayana) is an embodiment of Knowledge. He, indeed, is Mahadeva! He indeed, is Mahahari, too! He is the Resplendence of the resplendent! He is Paramesvara (the Supreme Lord). He alone is Parabrahman and I am That Brahman, no doubt!” (2-5)

जीवः शिवः शिवो जीवः स जीवः केवलः शिवः ।

तुषेण बद्धो व्रीहिः स्यात्तुषाभावेन तण्डुलः ॥ ६ ॥

jīvaḥ śivaḥ śivo jīvaḥ sa jīvaḥ kevalaḥ śivaḥ |
tuṣeṇa baddho vrīhiḥ syāttuṣābhāvena taṇḍulaḥ || 6 ||

एवं बद्धस्तथा जीवः कर्मनाशो सदाशिवः ।

पाशबद्धस्तथा जीवः पाशमुक्तः सदाशिवः ॥ ७ ॥

evaṃ baddhastathā jīvaḥ karmanāśo sadāśivaḥ |
pāśabaddhastathā jīvaḥ pāśamuktaḥ sadāśivaḥ || 7 ||

“Jiva is Siva; Siva is Jiva. Jiva is verily Siva alone! So long as the husk encases it, the grain is known as paddy; with the disappearance of the husk it is called rice. Similarly, when in bondage, it is Jiva; and when Karma is destroyed, it is Sadasiva.” (6-7)

शिवाय विष्णुरूपाय शिवरूपाय विष्णवे ।

शिवस्य हृदयं विष्णुः विष्णोश्च हृदयं शिवः ॥ ८ ॥

śivāya viṣṇurūpāya śivarūpāya viṣṇave |
śivasya hṛdayaṃ viṣṇuḥ viṣṇośca hṛdayaṃ śivaḥ || 8 ||

यथा शिवमयं विष्णुरेवं विष्णुमयः शिवः ।

यथान्तरं न पश्यामि तथा मे स्वस्तिरायुषि ॥ ९ ॥

yathā śivamayam viṣṇurevam viṣṇumayaḥ śivaḥ |
yathāntaram na paśyāmi tathā me svastirāyuṣi || 9 ||

यथान्तरं न भेदाः स्युः शिवकेशवयोस्तथा ।

देहो देवालयः प्रोक्तः स जीवः केवलः शिवः ॥ १० ॥

yathāntaram na bhedāḥ syuḥ śivakeśavayostathā |
deho devālayaḥ proktaḥ sa jīvaḥ kevalaḥ śivaḥ || 10 ||

त्यजेदज्ञाननिर्माल्यं सोऽहंभावेन पूजयेत् ।

अभेददर्शनं ज्ञानं ध्यानं निर्विषयं मनः ।

स्नानं मनोमलत्यागः शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ॥ ११ ॥

tyajedajñānanirmālyam so.ahambhāvena pūjayet |
abhedadarśanam jñānam dhyānam nirviṣayam manaḥ |
snānam manomalatyāgaḥ śaucamindriyanigrahaḥ || 11 ||

ब्रह्मामृतं पिबेद् भौक्षमाचरेद्देहरक्षणे ।

वसेदेकान्तिको भूत्वा चैकान्ते द्वैतवर्जिते ।

इत्येवमाचरेद्धीमान् स एवं मुक्तिमाप्नुयात् ॥ १२ ॥

brahmāmṛtaṁ pibed bhaukṣamācareddeharakṣaṇe |
vasedekāntiko bhūtvā caikānte dvaitavarjite |
ityevamācareddhīmān sa evaṁ muktimāpnuyāt || 12 ||

श्रीपरमहाम्ने स्वस्ति चिरायुष्योन्नम इति ।

विरिञ्चनारायणशङ्करात्मकं नृसिंह देवेश तव प्रसादतः ।

अचिन्त्यमव्यक्तमनन्तमव्ययं वेदात्मकं ब्रह्म निजं विजानते ॥ १३ ॥

śrīparamahāmne svasti cirāyuṣyonnaṁ itī |
viriñcanārāyaṇaśaṅkarātmakaṁ nṛsiṁha deveśa tava prasādataḥ |
acintyamavyaktamanantamavyayaṁ vedātmakaṁ brahma nijam vijānate
|| 13 ||

“Salutations to Siva of the form of Vishnu; and to Vishnu who is of the form of Siva! Siva’s heart is Vishnu; and Vishnu’s heart (real nature) is Siva. As Vishnu is Sivamaya, Siva is Vishnumaya. As I do not perceive any difference (between the two), so prosperity and long life are mine. The body is the Lord’s temple; and Jiva is Siva alone. One should worship it with the idea of SOHAM (I am He or a feeling of identity), abandoning the flowers of ignorance which have outlived their utility. *Jnana* or knowledge is perception of non-difference. *Dhyana* or meditation is to extricate the mind from sense-objects. *Snana* or bath is the cleansing of the impurities of the mind. Controlling the senses is purity or *Saucha*. The nectar of Brahman is to be drunk; and for the preservation of the body, alms are to be accepted. One should live alone without a second, and dwell upon that Secondless Atman. That wise man who does all this attains salvation. Salutations to that Paramadhama! May prosperity and long life be mine! Om. Om Narasimha! O Lord of Devas!

Through Thy Grace, one realises the true nature of Brahman, though beyond thought, unmanifest, endless and immutable, via, the forms of Gods: Brahma, Narayana and Sankara.”

तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः ।

दिवीव चक्षुराततम् ॥१४॥

tadviṣṇoḥ paramaṃ padaṃ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ |
divīva cakṣurātataṃ || 14 ||

तद्विप्रासो विपन्यवो जागृवांसः समिन्धते ।

विष्णोर्यत्परमं पदम् ।

इत्येतन्निर्वाणानुशासनमिति वेदानुशासनमिति वेदानुशासनमित्युपनिषत्

॥१५॥

tadviprāso vipanyavo jāgrvāṃsaḥ samindhate |
viṣṇoryatparamaṃ padaṃ |
ityetannirvāṇānuśāsanamiti vedānuśāsanamiti vedānuśāsanamityupaniṣat
|| 15 ||

ॐ सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु । मा विद्विषावहै ।

ॐ शान्तिः ! शान्तिः !! शान्तिः !!!

OM saha nāvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu | saha vīryaṃ karavāvahai |
tejasvi nāvadhītamastu | mā vidviṣāvahai |

OM śāntiḥ ! śāntiḥ !! śāntiḥ !!!

॥ इति स्कन्दोपनिषत् समाप्ता ॥

|| iti skandopaniṣat samāptā ||

“Just as the eye clearly sees the vast expanse of heaven, the wise always see the glorious state of Vishnu. Sages endowed with divine eyes, who are highly evolved, sing the praises of the Supreme Abode of Vishnu in diverse ways and thus illuminate it. This is the teaching of the Vedas for obtaining Nirvana (salvation).” Thus declares the Upanishad.

कार्तिकेय स्तोत्रम्
kārttikeya stotram

श्री गणेशाय नमः

स्कन्द उवाच

योगीश्वरो महासेनः कार्तिकेयोऽग्निनन्दः ।
स्कन्दः कुमारः सेनानीः स्वामी शङ्करसम्भवः ॥ १ ॥
गांगेयस्ताम्रचूडश्च ब्रह्मचारी शिखिध्वजः ।
तारकारिरुमापुत्रः क्रौञ्चारिश्च षडाननः ॥ २ ॥
शब्दब्रह्मसमुद्रश्च सिद्धः सारस्वतो गुहः ।
सनत्कुमारो भगवान् भोगमोक्षफलप्रदः ॥ ३ ॥
शरजन्मा गणाधीशः पूर्वजो मुक्तिमार्गकृत् ।
सर्वागमप्रणेता च वाञ्छितार्थप्रदर्शनः ॥ ४ ॥
अष्टाविंशतिनामानि मदीयानीति यः पठेत् ।
प्रत्यूषे श्रद्धया युक्तो मूको वाचस्पतिर्भवेत् ॥ ५ ॥
महामन्त्रमयानीति मम नामानुकीर्तनम् ।
महाप्रज्ञामवाप्नोति नात्र कारा विचारणा ॥ ६ ॥
इति श्रीरुद्रयामले प्रज्ञाविवर्धनाख्यं श्रीमत्कार्तिकेयस्तोत्रम् ।

śrī gaṇeśāya namaḥ
skanda uvāca

yogīśvaro mahāsenāḥ kārttikeyo.agninandaḥ |
skandaḥ kumāraḥ senānīḥ svāmī śaṅkarasambhavaḥ || 1 ||
gāṅgeyastāmracūḍaśca brahmacārī śikhidhvajaḥ |
tārakārirumāputraḥ krauñcārīśca ṣaḍānanaḥ || 2 ||
śabdabrahmasamudraśca siddhaḥ sārasvato guhaḥ |
sanatkumāro bhagavān bhogamokṣaphalapradaḥ || 3 ||
śarajanmā gaṇādhiśaḥ pūrvajo muktimārgakṛt |
sarvāgamapraṇetā ca vāṃchitārthapradarśanaḥ || 4 ||

aṣṭāvīṃśatināmāni madyānīti yaḥ paṭhet |
pratyūṣe śraddhayā yukto mūko vācaspatirbhavet || 5 ||
mahāmantramayānīti mama nāmānukīrtanam |
mahāprajñānavāpnoti nātra kārā vicāraṇā || 6 ||
iti śrīrudrayāmale prajñāvivardhanākhyam śrīmatkārttikeyastotram |

Twenty-eight Names of Karttikeya

1. योगीश्वरः (yogīśvaraḥ) — The Lord of Yogins
2. महासेनः (mahāsenah) — The great god of war; He who has a large army
3. कार्तिकेयः (kārttikeyah) — He who was nursed by the six *Krittika Devis*
4. अग्निनन्दनः (agninandanaḥ) — He who was born of the Fire (Light) of the Third-eye of Siva; Son of Fire-god,—as the *Tejas* of Siva was carried by him.
5. स्कन्दः (skandaḥ) — He who leaped out or emanated from the Third-eye of Siva
6. कुमारः (kumārah) — The destroyer of evils, both inside and outside
7. सेनानीः (senānīḥ) — The Commander-in-Chief of the Celestial armies
8. स्वामी शङ्करसम्भवः (svāmī śaṅkarasambhavaḥ) — Born of Lord Sankara
9. गाङ्गेयः (gāṅgeyah) — The Son of Ganga
10. ताम्रचूडः (tāmracūḍah) — He who has the Cock-banner
11. ब्रह्मचारी (brahmacārī) — He who is ever in Brahmic Consciousness; A celibate
12. शिखिध्वजः (śikhidhvajaḥ) — Whose flag is Fire
13. तारकारिः (tārakārīḥ) — The vanquisher of the powerful demon Taraka
14. उमापुत्रः (umāputraḥ) — The Son of Uma Devi or Parvati
15. क्रौंचारिः (krauṅcārīḥ) — The destroyer of (the mountain-shaped Asura) Krauncha
16. षडाननः (ṣaḍānanaḥ) — The Lord with six faces

17. **शब्दब्रह्मसमुद्रः** (śabdabrahmasamudraḥ) — He who is an ocean of Knowledge (represented by the Vedas)
18. **सिद्धः** (siddhaḥ) — The Perfected one
19. **सारस्वतः** (sārasvataḥ) — He whose Deity is Sarasvati Devi
20. **गुहः** (guhaḥ) — He who dwells in the heart cave of all beings; the Self of all; the Indweller of all
21. **बगवान् सनत्कुमारः** (bagavān sanatkumāraḥ) — (Who appeared as) Bhagavan Sanatkumara, one of the four mind-born sons of Brahma
22. **भोगमोक्षफलप्रदः** (bhogamokṣaphalapradaḥ) — The bestower of (worldly) enjoyments as well as Liberation.
23. **शरजन्मा** (śarajanmā) — He who was born in the thicket of *Sara* or reeds
24. **गणाधीशः** (gaṇādhiśaḥ)** — The Lord of the Devas (who are 422 in number***)
25. **पूर्वजः** (pūrvajaḥ) — The first-born
26. **मुक्तिमार्गकृत्** (muktimārgakṛt) — The bestower of Salvation
27. **सर्वागमप्रणेता** (sarvāgamapraṇetā) — The Originator of all the Vedas
28. **वाञ्छितार्थप्रदर्शनः** (vāṃchitārthapradarśanaḥ) — He who reveals Himself as the desired objects

** आदित्यविश्ववसवस्तुषिताभास्वरानिलाः ।
महाराजिकसाध्याश्च रुद्रश्च गणदेवताः ॥

ādityaviśvasavasavastuṣitābhāsvarānilāḥ |
mahārājikasādhyāśca rudraśca gaṇadevatāḥ

*** #12 Adityas, 10 Vishvedevas, 8 Vasus, 36 Tushitas, 64 Aabhasvaras, 49 Marut-Ganas, 220 Maharajikas, 12 Saadhyas, 11 Rudras (Total 422)

Lord Skanda said:

Whoever reads these twenty-eight Names of Mine in the early hours of dawn with faith and devotion, even if he be dumb, will become the Lord of Speech (Vachaspati).

By the recitation of these Names of Mine, which are equivalent to Maha-Mantras (Great Mantras or Formulas), one attains (secures) Supreme Consciousness. There is no doubt about this (one should not think otherwise).

This Karttikeya-Stotra, the giver of Great Wisdom, is from the *Rudrayamala* Tantra.

Subrahmanya Mantra

ॐ सरवणभवाय नमः

OM saravaṇabhavāya namaḥ

Dhyana Sloka

षडाननं कुङ्कुमरक्तवर्णं
महामतिं दिव्यमयूरवाहनम् ।
रुद्रस्य सूनुं सुरसैन्यनाथं
गुहं सदाऽहं शरणं प्रपद्ये ॥

ṣaḍānanaṃ kuṅkumarakṭavarṇaṃ
mahāmatiṃ divyamayūravāhanaṃ |
rudrasya sūnuṃ surasainyanāthaṃ
guhaṃ sadā.ahaṃ śaraṇaṃ prapadye ||

I always take refuge in Lord Guha of Six Faces,
Who is of deep red colour and Knowledge Infinite,
Who has the Divine Peacock to ride on,
The Son of Lord Siva and the Leader of the Army of Devas.

Shanmukha Gayatri

ॐ तत्पुरुषाय विद्महे महासेनाय धीमहि ।

तन्नः स्कन्दः प्रचोदयात् ॥

OM tatpuruṣāya vidmahe mahāsenāya dhīmahi |
tannaḥ skandaḥ pracodayāt ॥

Let us know That Supreme Being and meditate upon Him,
The Supreme General of the great Deva Army:
May He enlighten us and lead us to be One with Him, Lord Skanda.

॥ ॐ ॥

सुब्रह्मण्य अष्टोत्तरशतनामावलिः

॥ OM ॥

subrahmaṇya aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvaliḥ

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| १. ॐ स्कन्दाय नमः | 1. OM skandāya namaḥ |
| २. ॐ गुहाय नमः | 2. OM guhāya namaḥ |
| ३. ॐ षण्मुखाय नमः | 3. OM ṣaṇmukhāya namaḥ |
| ४. ॐ फालनेत्रसुताय नमः | 4. OM phālanetrasutāya namaḥ |
| ५. ॐ प्रभवे नमः | 5. OM prabhava namaḥ |
| ६. ॐ पिङ्गलाय नमः | 6. OM piṅgalāya namaḥ |
| ७. ॐ कृत्तिकासूनवे नमः | 7. OM kṛttikāsūnave namaḥ |
| ८. ॐ शिखिवाहाय नमः | 8. OM śikhivāhāya namaḥ |
| ९. ॐ द्विषड्भुजाय नमः | 9. OM dviṣaḍbhujāya namaḥ |
| १०. ॐ द्विषणेत्राय नमः | 10. OM dviṣaṇṇetrāya namaḥ |
| ११. ॐ शक्तिधराय नमः | 11. OM śaktidharāya namaḥ |
| १२. ॐ पिशिताशप्रभंजनाय नमः | 12. OM piśitāśaprabhaṅjanāya namaḥ |
| १३. ॐ तारकासुरसंहारिणे नमः | 13. OM tārakāsurasamhāriṇe namaḥ |

१४. ॐ रक्षोबलविमर्दनाय नमः	14. OM rakṣobalavimardanāya namaḥ
१५. ॐ मत्ताय नमः	15. OM mattāya namaḥ
१६. ॐ प्रमत्ताय नमः	16. OM pramattāya namaḥ
१७. ॐ उन्मत्ताय नमः	17. OM unmattāya namaḥ
१८. ॐ सुरसैन्यसुरक्षकाय नमः	18. OM surasainyasurakṣakāya namaḥ
१९. ॐ देवसेनापतये नमः	19. OM devasenāpataye namaḥ
२०. ॐ प्राज्ञाय नमः	20. OM prājñāya namaḥ
२१. ॐ कृपालवे नमः	21. OM kṛpālave namaḥ
२२. ॐ भक्तवत्सलाय नमः	22. OM bhaktavatsalāya namaḥ
२३. ॐ उमासुताय नमः	23. OM umāsutāya namaḥ
२४. ॐ शक्तिधराय नमः	24. OM śaktidharāya namaḥ
२५. ॐ कुमाराय नमः	25. OM kumārāya namaḥ
२६. ॐ क्रौञ्चदारणाय नमः	26. OM krauñcadāraṇāya namaḥ
२७. ॐ सेनान्यै नमः	27. OM senānyai namaḥ
२८. ॐ अग्निजन्मने नमः	28. OM agnijanmane namaḥ
२९. ॐ विशाखाय नमः	29. OM viśākhāya namaḥ
३०. ॐ शङ्करात्मजाय नमः	30. OM śaṅkarātmajāya namaḥ
३१. ॐ शिवस्वामिने नमः	31. OM śivasvāmine namaḥ
३२. ॐ स्वामिनाथाय नमः	32. OM svāmināthāya namaḥ
३३. ॐ सर्वस्वामिने नमः	33. OM sarvasvāmine namaḥ
३४. ॐ सनातनाय नमः	34. OM sanātanāya namaḥ
३५. ॐ अनन्तशक्तये नमः	35. OM anantaśaktaye namaḥ
३६. ॐ अक्षोभ्याय नमः	36. OM akṣobhyāya namaḥ

३७. ॐ पार्वतीप्रियनन्दनाय नमः	37. OM pārvatīpriyanandanāya namaḥ
३८. ॐ गङ्गासुताय नमः	38. OM gaṅgāsutāya namaḥ
३९. ॐ शरोद्भूताय नमः	39. OM śarodbhūtāya namaḥ
४०. ॐ पावकात्मजाय नमः	40. OM pāvakātmajāya namaḥ
४१. ॐ गणस्वामिने नमः	41. OM gaṇasvāmine namaḥ
४२. ॐ आत्मभुवे नमः	42. OM ātmabhuve namaḥ
४३. ॐ जृम्भाय नमः	43. OM jṛṃbhāya namaḥ
४४. ॐ प्रजृम्भाय नमः	44. OM prajṛṃbhāya namaḥ
४५. ॐ उज्जृम्भाय नमः	45. OM ujṛṃbhāya namaḥ
४६. ॐ कमलासनसंस्तुताय नमः	46. OM kamalāsanasaṃstutāya namaḥ
४७. ॐ एकवर्णाय नमः	47. OM ekavarṇāya namaḥ
४८. ॐ द्विवर्णाय नमः	48. OM dvivarṇāya namaḥ
४९. ॐ त्रिवर्णाय नमः	49. OM trivarṇāya namaḥ
५०. ॐ सुमनोहराय नमः	50. OM sumanoharāya namaḥ
५१. ॐ चतुर्वर्णाय नमः	51. OM caturvarṇāya namaḥ
५२. ॐ पञ्चवर्णाय नमः	52. OM pañcavarṇāya namaḥ
५३. ॐ प्रजापतये नमः	53. OM prajāpataye namaḥ
५४. ॐ अहर्षतये नमः	54. OM aharpataye namaḥ
५५. ॐ अग्निगर्भाय नमः	55. OM agnigarbhāya namaḥ
५६. ॐ शमीगर्भाय नमः	56. OM śamīgarbhāya namaḥ
५७. ॐ विश्वरेतसे नमः	57. OM viśvaretase namaḥ
५८. ॐ सुरारिघ्नाय नमः	58. OM surārighnāya namaḥ
५९. ॐ हरोद्वर्णाय नमः	59. OM harodvarṇāya namaḥ

६०. ॐ शुभकराय नमः	60. OM śubhakarāya namaḥ
६१. ॐ वासवाय नमः	61. OM vāsavāya namaḥ
६२. ॐ वटुवेषभृते नमः	62. OM vaṭuveṣabhr̥te namaḥ
६३. ॐ पूष्णे नमः	63. OM pūṣṇe namaḥ
६४. ॐ गभस्तिने नमः	64. OM gabhastine namaḥ
६५. ॐ गहनाय नमः	65. OM gahanāya namaḥ
६६. ॐ चन्द्रवर्णाय नमः	66. OM candravarṇāya namaḥ
६७. ॐ कलाधराय नमः	67. OM kalādhārāya namaḥ
६८. ॐ मायाधराय नमः	68. OM māyādhārāya namaḥ
६९. ॐ महामायिने नमः	69. OM mahāmāyine namaḥ
७०. ॐ कैवल्याय नमः	70. OM kaivalyāya namaḥ
७१. ॐ सकलात्मकाय नमः	71. OM sakalātmakāya namaḥ
७२. ॐ विश्वयोनये नमः	72. OM viśvayonaye namaḥ
७३. ॐ अमेयात्मने नमः	73. OM ameyātmāne namaḥ
७४. ॐ तेजोनिधये नमः	74. OM tejonidhaye namaḥ
७५. ॐ अनामयाय नमः	75. OM anāmayāya namaḥ
७६. ॐ परमेष्ठिने नमः	76. OM parameṣṭhine namaḥ
७७. ॐ परब्रह्मणे नमः	77. OM parabrahmaṇe namaḥ
७८. ॐ वेदगर्भाय नमः	78. OM vedagarbhāya namaḥ
७९. ॐ विराड्वपुषे नमः	79. OM virāḍvapuṣe namaḥ
८०. ॐ पुलिन्दकन्याभर्ते नमः	80. OM pulindakanyābharte namaḥ
८१. ॐ महासारस्वतावृताय नमः	81. OM mahāsārasvatāvṛtāya namaḥ
८२. ॐ आश्रिताखिलदात्रे नमः	82. OM āśritākḥiladātre namaḥ

८३. ॐ चोरघ्नाय नमः	83. OM coraghnāya namaḥ
८४. ॐ रोगनाशनाय नमः	84. OM roganāśanāya namaḥ
८५. ॐ अनन्तमूर्तये नमः	85. OM anantamūrtaye namaḥ
८६. ॐ आनन्दाय नमः	86. OM ānandāya namaḥ
८७. ॐ शिखण्डीकृतकेतनाय नमः	87. OM śikhaṇḍīkṛtaketanāya namaḥ
८८. ॐ डम्भाय नमः	88. OM ḍambhāya namaḥ
८९. ॐ परमडम्भाय नमः	89. OM paramaḍambhāya namaḥ
९०. ॐ महाडम्भाय नमः	90. OM mahāḍambhāya namaḥ
९१. ॐ वृषाकपये नमः	91. OM vṛṣākapaye namaḥ
९२. ॐ कारणोपात्तदेहाय नमः	92. OM kāraṇopāttadehāya namaḥ
९३. ॐ कारणातीतविग्रहाय नमः	93. OM kāraṇātītavigrahāya namaḥ
९४. ॐ अनीश्वराय नमः	94. OM anīśvarāya namaḥ
९५. ॐ अमृताय नमः	95. OM amṛtāya namaḥ
९६. ॐ प्राणाय नमः	96. OM prāṇāya namaḥ
९७. ॐ प्राणायामपरायणाय नमः	97. OM prāṇāyāmaparāyaṇāya namaḥ
९८. ॐ विरुद्धहन्त्रे नमः	98. OM viruddhahantre namaḥ
९९. ॐ विरघ्नाय नमः	99. OM viraghnāya namaḥ
१००. ॐ रक्तश्यामगलाय नमः	100. OM raktaśyāmagalāya namaḥ
१०१. ॐ महते नमः	101. OM mahate namaḥ
१०२. ॐ सुब्रह्मण्याय नमः	102. OM subrahmaṇyāya namaḥ
१०३. ॐ गुहाय नमः	103. OM guhāya namaḥ
१०४. ॐ ब्रह्मण्याय नमः	104. OM brahmaṇyāya namaḥ
१०५. ॐ वंशवृद्धिकराय नमः	105. OM vaṃśavṛddhikarāya namaḥ

१०६. ॐ ब्राह्मणाप्रियाय नमः 106. OM brāhmaṇāpriyāya namaḥ
१०७. ॐ अक्षयफलप्रदाय नमः 107. OM akṣayaphalapradāya namaḥ
१०८. ॐ वेदवेद्याय नमः 108. OM vedavedyāya namaḥ

इति श्री सुब्रह्मण्य अष्टोत्तरशतनामावलिः संपूर्णम् ।

iti śrī subrahmaṇya aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvaliḥ sampūrṇam |

॥ ॐ ॥

देवसेना नामावलिः

॥ OM ॥
devasenā nāmāvaliḥ

१. ॐ देवसेनायै नमः 1. OM devasenāyai namaḥ
२. ॐ देवलोकजनन्यै नमः 2. OM devalokajananyai namaḥ
३. ॐ दिव्यसुन्दर्यै नमः 3. OM divyasundaryai namaḥ
४. ॐ दयारूपायै नमः 4. OM dayārūpāyai namaḥ
५. ॐ दिव्याभरणभूषितायै नमः 5. OM divyābharaṇabhūṣitāyai namaḥ
६. ॐ देवपूज्यायै नमः 6. OM devapūjyāyai namaḥ
७. ॐ दारिद्र्यनाशिन्यै नमः 7. OM dāridryanāśinyai namaḥ
८. ॐ देव्यै नमः 8. OM devyai namaḥ
९. ॐ दिव्यपङ्कजधारिण्यै नमः 9. OM divyapaṅkajadhāriṇyai namaḥ
१०. ॐ दुःस्वप्ननाशिन्यै नमः 10. OM duḥsvapnanāśinyai namaḥ
११. ॐ दुष्टशमन्यै नमः 11. OM duṣṭaśamanyai namaḥ
१२. ॐ दोषवर्जितायै नमः 12. OM doṣavarjitāyai namaḥ
१३. ॐ पीताम्बरायै नमः 13. OM pītāambarāyai namaḥ

१४. ॐ पद्मवासायै नमः	14. OM padmavāsāyai namaḥ
१५. ॐ परानन्दायै नमः	15. OM parānandāyai namaḥ
१६. ॐ परात्परायै नमः	16. OM parātparāyai namaḥ
१७. ॐ पूर्णायै नमः	17. OM pūrṇāyai namaḥ
१८. ॐ परमकल्याण्यै नमः	18. OM paramakalyāṇyai namaḥ
१९. ॐ प्रकटायै नमः	19. OM prakatāyai namaḥ
२०. ॐ पापनाशिन्यै नमः	20. OM pāpanāśinyai namaḥ
२१. ॐ प्राणेश्वर्यै नमः	21. OM prāṇeśvaryai namaḥ
२२. ॐ परायै शक्त्यै नमः	22. OM parāyai śaktyai namaḥ
२३. ॐ परमायै नमः	23. OM paramāyai namaḥ
२४. ॐ परमेश्वर्यै नमः	24. OM parameśvaryai namaḥ
२५. ॐ महावीर्यायै नमः	25. OM mahāvīryāyai namaḥ
२६. ॐ महाभोगायै नमः	26. OM mahābhogāyai namaḥ
२७. ॐ महापूज्यायै नमः	27. OM mahāpūjyāyai namaḥ
२८. ॐ महाबलायै नमः	28. OM mahābalāyai namaḥ
२९. ॐ माहेन्द्र्यै नमः	29. OM māhendryai namaha
३०. ॐ महत्यै नमः	30. OM mahatyai namaḥ
३१. ॐ मायायै नमः	31. OM māyāyai namaḥ
३२. ॐ मुक्ताहारविभूषितायै नमः	32. OM muktāhāravibhūṣitāyai namaḥ
३३. ॐ ब्रह्मानन्दायै नमः	33. OM brahmānandāyai namaḥ
३४. ॐ ब्रह्मरूपायै नमः	34. OM brahmarūpāyai namaḥ
३५. ॐ ब्रह्माण्यै नमः	35. OM brahmānyai namaḥ
३६. ॐ ब्रह्मपूजितायै नमः	36. OM brahmapūjitāyai namaḥ

३७. ॐ कार्तिकेयप्रियायै नमः	37. OM kārṭṭikeyapriyāyai namaḥ
३८. ॐ कान्तायै नमः	38. OM kāntāyai namaḥ
३९. ॐ कामरूपायै नमः	39. OM kāmarūpāyai namaḥ
४०. ॐ कलाधरायै नमः	40. OM kalādhārāyai namaḥ
४१. ॐ विष्णुपूज्यायै नमः	41. OM viṣṇupūjyāyai namaḥ
४२. ॐ विश्ववन्द्यायै नमः	42. OM viśvavandyāyai namaḥ
४३. ॐ वेदवेद्यायै नमः	43. OM vedavedyāyai namaḥ
४४. ॐ वरप्रदायै नमः	44. OM varapradāyai namaḥ
४५. ॐ विशाखकान्तायै नमः	45. OM viśākhakāntāyai namaḥ
४६. ॐ विमलायै नमः	46. OM vimalāyai namaḥ
४७. ॐ वज्रिजातायै नमः	47. OM vajrijātāyai namaḥ
४८. ॐ वरप्रदायै नमः	48. OM varapradāyai namaḥ
४९. ॐ सत्यसन्धायै नमः	49. OM satyasandhāyai namaḥ
५०. ॐ सत्यप्रभावायै नमः	50. OM satyaprabhāvāyai namaḥ
५१. ॐ सिद्धिदायै नमः	51. OM siddhidāyai namaḥ
५२. ॐ स्कन्दवल्लभायै नमः	52. OM skandavallabhāyai namaḥ
५३. ॐ सुरेश्वर्यै नमः	53. OM sureśvaryai namaḥ
५४. ॐ सर्ववन्द्यायै नमः	54. OM sarvavandyāyai namaḥ
५५. ॐ सुन्दर्यै नमः	55. OM sundaryai namaḥ
५६. ॐ साम्यवर्जितायै नमः	56. OM sām्यavarjitāyai namaḥ
५७. ॐ हतदैत्यायै नमः	57. OM hatadaityāyai namaḥ
५८. ॐ हानिहीनायै नमः	58. OM hānihināyai namaḥ
५९. ॐ हर्षदात्र्यै नमः	59. OM harṣadātryai namaḥ

६०. ॐ हतासुरायै नमः	60. OM hatāsurāyai namaḥ
६१. ॐ हितकत्र्यै नमः	61. OM hitakatryai namaḥ
६२. ॐ हीनदोषायै नमः	62. OM hīnadoṣāyai namaḥ
६३. ॐ हेमाभायै नमः	63. OM hemābhāyai namaḥ
६४. ॐ हेमभूषणायै नमः	64. OM hemabhūṣaṇāyai namaḥ
६५. ॐ लयहीनायै नमः	65. OM layahīnāyai namaḥ
६६. ॐ लोकवन्द्यायै नमः	66. OM lokavandyāyai namaḥ
६७. ॐ ललितायै नमः	67. OM lalitāyai namaḥ
६८. ॐ ललनोत्तमायै नमः	68. OM lalanottamāyai namaḥ
६९. ॐ लम्बवामकरायै नमः	69. OM lambavāmakarāyai namaḥ
७०. ॐ लभ्यायै नमः	70. OM labhyāyai namaḥ
७१. ॐ लज्जाढ्यायै नमः	71. OM lajjāḍhyāyai namaḥ
७२. ॐ लाभदायिन्यै नमः	72. OM lābhadāyinyai namaḥ
७३. ॐ अचिन्त्यशक्त्यै नमः	73. OM acintyaśaktyai namaḥ
७४. ॐ अचलायै नमः	74. OM acalāyai namaḥ
७५. ॐ अचिन्त्यरूपायै नमः	75. OM acintyarūpāyai namaḥ
७६. ॐ अक्षरायै नमः	76. OM akṣarāyai namaḥ
७७. ॐ अभयायै नमः	77. OM abhayāyai namaḥ
७८. ॐ अम्बुजाक्ष्यै नमः	78. OM ambujākṣyai namaḥ
७९. ॐ अमराराध्यायै नमः	79. OM amarārādhyāyai namaḥ
८०. ॐ अभयदायै नमः	80. OM abhayadāyai namaḥ
८१. ॐ असुरभीतिदायै नमः	81. OM asurabhītidāyai namaḥ
८२. ॐ शर्मदायै नमः	82. OM śarmadāyai namaḥ

८३. ॐ शक्रतनयायै नमः	83. OM śakratanayāyai namaḥ
८४. ॐ शङ्करात्मजवल्लभायै नमः	84. OM śaṅkarātmajavallabhāyai namaḥ
८५. ॐ शुभायै नमः	85. OM śubhāyai namaḥ
८६. ॐ शुभप्रदायै नमः	86. OM śubhapradāyai namaḥ
८७. ॐ श्रद्धायै नमः	87. OM śraddhāyai namaḥ
८८. ॐ शरणागतवत्सलायै नमः	88. OM śaraṇāgatavatsalāyai namaḥ
८९. ॐ मयूरवाहनदयितायै नमः	89. OM mayūravāhanadayitāyai namaḥ
९०. ॐ महामहिमशालिन्यै नमः	90. OM mahāmahimaśālinyai namaḥ
९१. ॐ मदहीनायै नमः	91. OM madahīnāyai namaḥ
९२. ॐ मातृपूज्यायै नमः	92. OM mātṛpūjyāyai namaḥ
९३. ॐ मन्मथारिसुतप्रियायै नमः	93. OM manmathārisutapriyāyai namaḥ
९४. ॐ गुणपूर्णायै नमः	94. OM guṇapūrṇāyai namaḥ
९५. ॐ गणाराक्षयायै नमः	95. OM gaṇārākṣayāyai namaḥ
९६. ॐ गौरीसुतमनःप्रियायै नमः	96. OM gaurīsutamanaḥpriyāyai namaḥ
९७. ॐ गतदोषायै नमः	97. OM gatadoṣāyai namaḥ
९८. ॐ गतावद्यायै नमः	98. OM gatāvadyāyai namaḥ
९९. ॐ गङ्गाजातकुटुम्बिन्यै नमः	99. OM gaṅgājātakuṭumbinyai namaḥ
१००. ॐ चतुरायै नमः	100. OM caturāyai namaḥ
१०१. ॐ चन्द्रवदनायै नमः	101. OM candravadanāyai namaḥ
१०२. ॐ चन्द्रचूडभवप्रियायै नमः	102. OM candracūḍabhavapriyāyai namaḥ
१०३. ॐ रम्यरूपायै नमः	103. OM ramyarūpāyai namaḥ
१०४. ॐ रमावन्द्यायै नमः	104. OM ramāvandyāyai namaḥ
१०५. ॐ रुद्रसूनुमनःप्रियायै नमः	105. OM rudrasūnumanaḥpriyāyai namaḥ

१०६. ॐ मङ्गलायै नमः 106. OM maṅgalāyai namaḥ
 १०७. ॐ मधुरालापायै नमः 107. OM madhurālāpāyai namaḥ
 १०८. ॐ महेशतनयप्रियायै नमः 108. OM maheśatanayapriyāyai namaḥ

इति श्री देवसेना अष्टोत्तरशतनामावलिः संपूर्णम् ।

iti śrī devasenā aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvaliḥ sampūrṇam |

॥ ॐ ॥

वल्ली नामावलिः

॥ OM ॥
valli nāmāvaliḥ

१. ॐ वल्ल्यै नमः 1. OM vallyai namaḥ
 २. ॐ वन्द्यायै नमः 2. OM vandyāyai namaḥ
 ३. ॐ वनवासायै नमः 3. OM vanavāsāyai namaḥ
 ४. ॐ वरलक्ष्म्यै नमः 4. OM varalakṣmyai namaḥ
 ५. ॐ वरप्रदायै नमः 5. OM varapradāyai namaḥ
 ६. ॐ वाणीस्तुतायै नमः 6. OM vāṇīstutāyai namaḥ
 ७. ॐ वीतामोहायै नमः 7. OM vītāmohāyai namaḥ
 ८. ॐ वामदेवसुतप्रियायै नमः 8. OM vāmadevasutapriyāyai namaḥ
 ९. ॐ वैकुण्ठतनयायै नमः 9. OM vaikuṅṭhatanayāyai namaḥ
 १०. ॐ वर्यायै नमः 10. OM varyāyai namaḥ
 ११. ॐ वनेचरसमादृतायै नमः 11. OM vanecarasamādr̥tāyai namaḥ
 १२. ॐ दयापूर्णायै नमः 12. OM dayāpūrṇāyai namaḥ
 १३. ॐ दिव्यस्वरूपायै नमः 13. OM divyasvarūpāyai namaḥ

१४. ॐ दारिद्र्यभयनाशिन्यै नमः	14. OM dāridryabhayanāśinyai namaḥ
१५. ॐ देवस्तुतायै नमः	15. OM devastutāyai namaḥ
१६. ॐ दैत्यहन्त्र्यै नमः	16. OM daityahantryai namaḥ
१७. ॐ दोषहीनायै नमः	17. OM doṣahīnāyai namaḥ
१८. ॐ दयाम्बुधये नमः	18. OM dayāmbudhaye namaḥ
१९. ॐ दुःखहन्त्र्यै नमः	19. OM duḥkhantryai namaḥ
२०. ॐ दुष्टदूरायै नमः	20. OM duṣṭadūrāyai namaḥ
२१. ॐ दुरितघ्न्यै नमः	21. OM duritaghnyai namaḥ
२२. ॐ दुरासदायै नमः	22. OM durāsadāyai namaḥ
२३. ॐ नाशहीनायै नमः	23. OM nāśahīnāyai namaḥ
२४. ॐ नागनुतायै नमः	24. OM nāganutāyai namaḥ
२५. ॐ नारदस्तुतवैभवायै नमः	25. OM nāradastutavaibhavāyai namaḥ
२६. ॐ लवलीकुञ्जसंभूतायै नमः	26. OM lavalīkuñjasambhūtāyai namaḥ
२७. ॐ ललितायै नमः	27. OM lalitāyai namaḥ
२८. ॐ ललनोत्तमायै नमः	28. OM lalanottamāyai namaḥ
२९. ॐ शान्तदोषायै नमः	29. OM śāntadoṣāyai namaḥ
३०. ॐ शर्मदात्र्यै नमः	30. OM śarmadātryai namaḥ
३१. ॐ शरजन्मकुटुम्बिन्यै नमः	31. OM śarajanmakuṭumbinyai namaḥ
३२. ॐ पद्मिन्यै नमः	32. OM padminyai namaḥ
३३. ॐ पद्मवदनायै नमः	33. OM padmavadanāyai namaḥ
३४. ॐ पद्मनाभसुतायै नमः	34. OM padmanābhasutāyai namaḥ
३५. ॐ परायै नमः	35. OM parāyai namaḥ
३६. ॐ पूर्णरूपायै नमः	36. OM pūrṇarūpāyai namaḥ

३७. ॐ पुण्यशीलायै नमः	37. OM puṇyaśīlāyai namaḥ
३८. ॐ प्रियंगुवनपालिन्यै नमः	38. OM priyaṅguvanapālinyai namaḥ
३९. ॐ सुन्दर्यै नमः	39. OM sundaryai namaḥ
४०. ॐ सुरसंस्तुतायै नमः	40. OM surasaṁstutāyai namaḥ
४१. ॐ सुब्रह्मण्यकुटुम्बिन्यै नमः	41. OM subrahmaṇyakuṭumbinyai namaḥ
४२. ॐ मायायै नमः	42. OM māyāyai namaḥ
४३. ॐ मनोहरायै नमः	43. OM manoharāyai namaḥ
४४. ॐ मान्यायै नमः	44. OM mānyāyai namaḥ
४५. ॐ महेश्वरसुतप्रियायै नमः	45. OM maheśvarasutapriyāyai namaḥ
४६. ॐ कुमार्यै नमः	46. OM kumāryai namaḥ
४७. ॐ करुणापूर्णायै नमः	47. OM karuṇāpūrṇāyai namaḥ
४८. ॐ कार्तिकेयमनोहरायै नमः	48. OM kārttikeyamanoharāyai namaḥ
४९. ॐ पद्मनेत्रायै नमः	49. OM padmanetrāyai namaḥ
५०. ॐ परानन्दायै नमः	50. OM parānandāyai namaḥ
५१. ॐ पार्वतीसुतवल्लभायै नमः	51. OM pārvatīsutavallabhāyai namaḥ
५२. ॐ महादेव्यै नमः	52. OM mahādevyai namaḥ
५३. ॐ महामायायै नमः	53. OM mahāmāyāyai namaḥ
५४. ॐ मल्लिकाकुसुमप्रियायै नमः	54. OM mallikākusumapriyāyai namaḥ
५५. ॐ चन्द्रवक्त्रायै नमः	55. OM candravaktrāyai namaḥ
५६. ॐ चारुरूपायै नमः	56. OM cārurūpāyai namaḥ
५७. ॐ चाम्पेयकुसुमप्रियायै नमः	57. OM cāmpeyakusumapriyāyai namaḥ
५८. ॐ गिरिवासायै नमः	58. OM girivāsāyai namaḥ
५९. ॐ गुणनिधये नमः	59. OM guṇanidhaye namaḥ

६०. ॐ गतावन्यायै नमः	60. OM gatāvanyāyai namaḥ
६१. ॐ गुहप्रियायै नमः	61. OM guhapriyāyai namaḥ
६२. ॐ कलिहीनायै नमः	62. OM kalihīnāyai namaḥ
६३. ॐ कलारूपायै नमः	63. OM kalārūpāyai namaḥ
६४. ॐ कृत्तिकासुतकामिन्यै नमः	64. OM kṛttikāsutakāminyai namaḥ
६५. ॐ गतदोषायै नमः	65. OM gatadoṣāyai namaḥ
६६. ॐ गीतगुणायै नमः	66. OM gītaguṇāyai namaḥ
६७. ॐ गङ्गाधरसुतप्रियायै नमः	67. OM gaṅgādharasutapriyāyai namaḥ
६८. ॐ भद्ररूपायै नमः	68. OM bhadrarūpāyai namaḥ
६९. ॐ भगवत्यै नमः	69. OM bhagavatyai namaḥ
७०. ॐ भाग्यदायै नमः	70. OM bhāgyadāyai namaḥ
७१. ॐ भवहारिण्यै नमः	71. OM bhavahāriṇyai namaḥ
७२. ॐ भवहीनायै नमः	72. OM bhavahīnāyai namaḥ
७३. ॐ भव्यदेहायै नमः	73. OM bhavyadehāyai namaḥ
७४. ॐ भवात्मजमनोहरायै नमः	74. OM bhavātmajamanoharāyai namaḥ
७५. ॐ सौम्यायै नमः	75. OM saumyāyai namaḥ
७६. ॐ सर्वेश्वरायै नमः	76. OM sarveśvarāyai namaḥ
७७. ॐ सत्यायै नमः	77. OM satyāyai namaḥ
७८. ॐ साध्व्यै नमः	78. OM sādhyai namaḥ
७९. ॐ सिद्धसमर्चितायै नमः	79. OM siddhasamarcitāyai namaḥ
८०. ॐ हानिहीनायै नमः	80. OM hānihīnāyai namaḥ
८१. ॐ हरिसुतायै नमः	81. OM harisutāyai namaḥ
८२. ॐ हरसूनुमनःप्रियायै नमः	82. OM harasūnumanaḥpriyāyai namaḥ

८३. ॐ कल्याण्यै नमः	83. OM kalyāṅyai namaḥ
८४. ॐ कमलायै नमः	84. OM kamalāyai namaḥ
८५. ॐ कल्यायै नमः	85. OM kalyāyai namaḥ
८६. ॐ कुमारसुमनोहरायै नमः	86. OM kumārasumanoharāyai namaḥ
८७. ॐ जनिहीनायै नमः	87. OM janihīnāyai namaḥ
८८. ॐ जन्महन्त्र्यै नमः	88. OM janmahantryai namaḥ
८९. ॐ जनार्दनसुतायै नमः	89. OM janārdanasutāyai namaḥ
९०. ॐ जयायै नमः	90. OM jayāyai namaḥ
९१. ॐ रमायै नमः	91. OM ramāyai namaḥ
९२. ॐ रामायै नमः	92. OM rāmāyai namaḥ
९३. ॐ रम्यरूपायै नमः	93. OM ramyarūpāyai namaḥ
९४. ॐ राज्ञ्यै नमः	94. OM rājñyai namaḥ
९५. ॐ राजरवादृतायै नमः	95. OM rājaravādr̥tāyai namaḥ
९६. ॐ नीतिज्ञायै नमः	96. OM nītijñāyai namaḥ
९७. ॐ निर्मलायै नमः	97. OM nirmalāyai namaḥ
९८. ॐ नित्यायै नमः	98. OM nityāyai namaḥ
९९. ॐ नीलकण्ठसुतप्रियायै नमः	99. OM nīlakaṅṭhasutapriyāyai namaḥ
१००. ॐ शिवरूपायै नमः	100. OM śivarūpāyai namaḥ
१०१. ॐ शताकारायै नमः	101. OM śatākārāyai namaḥ
१०२. ॐ शिखिवाहनवल्लभायै नमः	102. OM śikhivāhanavallabhāyai namaḥ
१०३. ॐ व्याधात्मजायै नमः	103. OM vyādhātmaajāyai namaḥ
१०४. ॐ व्याधिहन्त्र्यै नमः	104. OM vyādhihantryai namaḥ
१०५. ॐ विविधागमसंस्तुतायै नमः	105. OM vividhāgamasamstutāyai namaḥ

१०५. ॐ विविधागमसंस्तुतायै नमः 106. OM harṣadātryai namaḥ
१०६. ॐ हर्षदात्र्यै नमः 107. OM haribhavāyai namaḥ
१०७. ॐ हरिभवायै नमः 108. OM harasūnupriyāyai namaḥ

इति श्री वल्ली अष्टोत्तरशतनामावलिः संपूर्णम् ।

iti śrī vallī aṣṭottaraśatanāmāvaliḥ sampūrṇam |

Names of Lord Shanmukha

I

Lord Skanda or Subrahmanya is known by various names. Each name has got its own significance and points out a particular form or aspect of the Lord. Of them, a few are enumerated here with their real import.

Lord Shanmukha: Lord with six-faces. The story tells us how from the Trikuti of Lord Siva the Divine Sparks flashed out and how Agni and Vayu carried them and dropped them into the Ganga. Ganga took the Rays to Saravanappoigai. Thus we see the combination of all the five elements in the Avatara of Lord Shanmukha. The Light, which stands for the Divine Spirit and source of Life to all beings enters Akasa (space) from its abode in the Lord (Lord Siva's Trikuti). On reaching Akasa, it was received by Agni (represented in the Puranas as god of Fire) and Vayu (the Wind-god), who carry the Sparks to Mother Ganga. Ganga here represents the element of water. Taking these Sparks she leaves them in the Saravanappoigai, which stands for the earth (*Prithvi*) element.

Thus the Avatara of Lord Shanmukha is indicative of the combination of the Five Elements with the Spirit, as is the case with every living being on earth. But to distinguish and glorify the personality and the achievements of the Lord, who had come to save the suffering lives and to punish the wicked, everyone of the elements has been represented by one face. And the sixth face represents the Life-principle or the Spirit. Thus have the omniscience, the omnipotence and the omnipresence of the Almighty been gloriously personified for the easy grasp of the average mind.

Lord Subrahmanya: The *Svarupa* of Lord Shanmukha is Jyotirmaya. It is the Divine Spark from the Trikuti of Lord Siva that created the six-faced Lord Shanmukha. It denotes the Light of lights that illumines the hearts of all. Further, it also means the Light that destroys the darkness of ignorance of the Jivas. The Lord who had taken the Avatara to destroy the veil of Maya behind which Surapadma was suffering and to enable him to have a cosmic vision of the Lord, has been rightly called Subrahmanya.

Lord Skanda: One, whose presence is sweet-smelling or fragrant. This term 'Skanda' was used by Parvati Devi when she took the newborn babe from the six lotus flowers in

Saravanappoigai. In the material world, even the best scent loses its fragrance after a time; even the most fragrant flower does not last long. But in the case of His Divine Form, the word Skanda is, indeed, very aptly used. For, only everlasting beauty and undecaying fragrance can be had in that Abode of Eternal Bliss and Supreme Happiness. To distinguish the mortal from the immortal and to glorify the Divine form, such a term as Skanda has been well employed.

‘Skanda’ also means ‘the joined One’. When Parvati Devi took the six babies from the six lotuses, they joined themselves and assumed a single body with six faces and twelve hands. Hence He is called as Skanda. He also causes the joining or union (Yoga) of the Jiva with Himself.

‘Skanda’ also means ‘One who was ejected’ or ‘One who leaped out’ and refers to the way of His emanation from the third-eye of Lord Siva.

Lord Saravanabhava: The Mantra of Lord Shanmukha, the six-faced Lord, is the six-syllabled word “Saravanabhava.” Saravana actually means a shrub that grows in plenty in marshy places (*Naanal*). As the Lord had His Avatara in a lotus-pond surrounded on all sides by this shrub, He was known by the name of Saravanabhava, and the word ‘Saravanabhava’ has become the very Mantra of the Deity. By the repetition of this Mantra man can achieve the highest goal of life: Peace and Happiness. The six-lettered word has its own significance. Just as the six faces represent the five elements of matter and the Spirit, each of the first five syllables stands for one element, and the sixth for the Spirit. Repetition of this Mantra alone, with concentration of mind and *Bhava*, can bestow on the aspirant mental peace and happiness, and success in all his undertakings. The sound-effect of this word has a soothing influence over the troubled waters of the mind-lake. The glory and importance of such a Mantra evolved by the sages of yore cannot be overestimated.

Lord Karttik: The six babes that were lying on the lotuses in the Saravanappoigai were nursed by the Devis of the constellation, Krittikai (the 3rd Star). Hence the Lord came to be known by the name of Karttikeya or Karttik Swami.

Gangeya: The son of Mother Ganga. As the Divine Sparks were carried over to Saravanappoigai by Mother Ganga, the form of the Lord that came out was called Gangeya.

Kumara Devan: As the Lord is endowed with undecaying beauty and everlasting youth, He is named the Kumar (son) of Lord Siva; Kumaran, Kumaraswamy or Kumara Devan are variations.

Velayudha: Whose Divine Weapon is the *Vel* or Spear. When Lord Subrahmanya was about to embark on His adventures in the South for the conquest of the Asuras, Lord Siva out of His supreme Yogic powers moulded a spear-like weapon (known as *Vel*) for Lord Skanda to wield. It is by this *Vel* that Surapadma and his Asura dynasty were destroyed. This *Vel* represents the Jnana Sakti i.e., Supreme Knowledge that tears asunder the veil of ignorance. The embodiment of this Supreme Knowledge is in the form of Lord Subrahmanya, who is Knowledge Absolute. Thus Lord Subrahmanya is termed as Velayudha, one who is having the weapon, *Vel*, with him always; it also means one who destroys ignorance (Ajnana) and bestows Supreme Knowledge (Jnana) on His devotees.

LORD SHANMUKHA AND HIS WORSHIP

Saktidhara Murty: We find with Lord Karttik, personalities illustrating the various Saktis. The *Vel* represents Jnana Sakti. Valli and Deivayanai, His consorts, represent Iccha Sakti and Kriya Sakti, respectively. Hence Lord Shanmukha is known by the name of the Lord of Saktis or the Lord who grants Saktis to all. Hence the name Saktidhara Murty.

Murugan: Murugan is a Tamil name given to Lord Shanmukha. The term Murugan represents a Being with everlasting beauty, eternal youth and Godliness. The form of Lord Shanmukha has, therefore, been aptly denoted by the ancients as Murugan.

Guhan: One who dwells in the *cave* of the heart. As the Lord who is adored in various forms and names, as above, is the Indweller of the hearts of all and the Inner-controller of all, He has been named as Guhan. He dwells in the cave of the heart of all and especially those of His devotees to whom He is more easily accessible than to others whose minds are not turned towards Him. Guha means a cave. The heart is compared to a cave. The Light of lights that illumines the cave of all hearts is Lord Shanmukha or Guha.

Swaminathan: Shanmukha put Lord Brahma in prison on the ground that Brahma, though the creator, was himself ignorant of the full significance of the Pranava. To release him, Lord Siva went over to Lord Shanmukha. After complying with the orders of His father, Shanmukha revealed to Lord Siva the secret of the Pranava. Siva heard this secret discourse on Pranava in the attitude of a disciple receiving Upadesa from his Guru. Hence the Lord was named as Swaminathan or Guruswami or Siva Gurunathan. 'Swami' denotes Lord Siva, and 'Nathan' means Guru or Lord.

Glory to Lord Skanda, the illuminator of our Intellects! Glory to Lord Swaminathan, the Inner-controller of all! May His blessings be upon all!

II

Murugan	One who is possessed of eternal youth
Kumara	Youth
Guha	Indweller of the heart
Guruparan	He who initiated his father
Skanda	The Integrated Form
Saravanabhava	One who was born among a bush or reeds
Arumugan	Six-faced
Subrahmanya	The Supreme Effulgence
Velayudha	The wielder of the Spear
Shanmukha	Six-faced
Dandapani	Holder of the Sceptre
Sevvel	The paragon among Devas
Mayil Vahanan	The Peacock-Rider

Karttikeya	He who was brought up by Krittika vestal Virgins
Kadamban	The wearer of the Kadamba flower garland
Kurinchi Kizhavan	The Lord of the Hills.

Lord Subrahmanya's Six Heads

The six heads of Lord Subrahmanya
 Represent the six Chakras.
 They also represent
 The five senses and the mind.
 They represent the six attributes of Bhagawan—
 Jnana, Vairagya and Aishwarya,
 Dharma, Kirti and Sri.

APPENDIX—II

Kirtans of Lord Shanmukha

1. Saravanabhava Saravanabhava Saravanabhava Pahi Maam;
 Subrahmanya Subrahmanya Subrahmanya Raksha Maam.
2. Vel-Muruga Vel-Muruga Vel-Muruga Pahi Maam;
 Velayudha Velayudha Velayudha Raksha Maam.
3. Guha Muruga Shanmukha, Udipi Subrahmanya
 Tiruchendur Vela, Kathirkaamanatha
 Deivayanee-Sameta, Palanimalai Aandava
 Om Saravanabhava Guha Murugesha.
(Thars: Mahamantra)
4. Guha Muruga, Guha Muruga, Muruga Muruga, Guha Guha;
 Valli Deivayani, Valli Deivayani, Deivayani Deivayani, Valli Valli.
5. Vel Muruga Vel Muruga, Muruga Muruga Vel Vel,
 Kanda Vel, Kanda Vel, Kanda Kanda, Vel Vel.
6. *(Thars: Gopala Jaya Jaya, Govinda Jaya Jaya)*
 Shanmukha Jaya Jaya, Subrahmanya Jaya Jaya,
 Valli Deivayanee-Priya Subrahmanya Jaya Jaya.
7. *(Thars: Sankara Siva)*
 Shanmukha Bala Shanmukha Bala Shanmukha Bala Shanmukha;
 Subrahmanya Siva, Subrahmanya Siva Subrahmanya Siva Subrahmanya;
 Bhaktavatsala Bhaktavatsala Bhaktavatsala Bhaktavatsala;
 Patitapavana Patitapavana Patitapavana Patitapavana.

8. (*Thars: Rama Hare Shiya Rama Rama*)

Vel Muruga Jaya Vel Muruga,
Vel Muruga Jaya Vel Muruga,
Vel Muruga Jaya Velayudha,
Vel Muruga Jaya Velayudha.
Guha Muruga Jaya Subrahmanya
Guha Muruga Jaya Subrahmanya
Guha Muruga Jaya Saravanabhava
Guha Muruga Jaya Saravanabhava.

9. (*Tamil Tune*)

Anandam Anandam Anandam Anandam
Anandam Anandam Anandam Anandam
Anandam Muruganai Anbudan Bhajithal
Anandam Anandam Anandam Anandam.

10. (*Thars: Jaya Radhe, Jaya Radhe*)

Jaya Valli, Jaya Valli Valli, Jaya Valli Jaya Sri Valli
Jaya Deivayanai Jaya Deivayanai Jaya Deivayanai Jaya Sri Deivayanai.
Jaya Muruga, Jaya Muruga Muruga, Jaya Muruga Jaya Velayudha.
Jaya Muruga, Jaya Muruga Muruga, Jaya Muruga Jaya Shanmukha.

11. (*Thars: Bol Shankar*)

Bol Shanmukha, Bol Shanmukha, Shanmukha Shanmukha Bol.
Siva Siva Siva Siva Subrahmanya Saravanabhava Bol.
Bol Shanmukha, Bol Shanmukha, Shanmukha Shanmukha Bol.
Siva Siva Siva Siva Subrahmanya Bhaktavatsala Bol.

12. Om Guha Om Guha Om Guha Om;
Om Guha Om Guha Om Guha Om.

13. Shanmukha Muruga Subrahmanya, Satchidananda Subrahmanya.
Shanmukha Skanda Subrahmanya, Satchidananda Subrahmanya.

14. Skandam Vande Namostute,
 Jaya Shanmukha Natha Namostute;
Muruga Guhane Namostute,
 Jaya Valli-Vallabha Namostute;
Karttikeya Namostute,
 Jaya Kathirkama Vasa Namostute;
Dandayudhapani Namostute,
 Jaya Thiruparankundra Namostute;
Deiyanai-Sameta Namostute,
 Jaya Anaatha-Rakshaka Namostute;
Deenabandhu Namostute,
 Jaya Deena-Natha Namostute;

Deva Deva Namostute,
 Jaya Deva-Natha Namostute;
Bhaktavatsala Namostute,
 Jaya Patitapavana Namostute.

Song of Muruga

(*Kavadichindu: Vallimalai..*)

Valli-Deivayanai-Sameta — Subrahmanya
Priya Shanmuganatha — Karttikeya
Saravanabhava Guha Muruga Skanda Velayudha Vadi Vela — Palani Andava.
He who dwells as Dandapani — in the Palani Hills
(He who destroyed the Asura-Surapadma)
To him I give my salutations and prostrations.
Come, Come, O Lord; give me Darshan, guide me, save me, enlighten me.
Pahi Mam — Muruga — Raksha Mam
(Valli...)

Song of Tirupugaz

Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram
 —Ram Ram Ram Ram Ram
 —Ram Ram Ram Ram
Kichu Kichu Ambalam — Kiya Kiya Ambalam
 — Machu (Machu) Ambalam
 — Maya (Maya) Ambalam.
Why do you cling to the miserable life,
Attain the wealth of Vairagya
 — Rest peacefully —
In your own Atman.
This world is illusory, life is like a bubble
 — Cultivate Vairagya
 — Rest in your own Self,
The mind is the cause for your bondage and liberation
 — Learn to discriminate.
Realise your Self.
Negate the body and mind, Meditate on *Aham Brahma Asmi*
 — Feel I am Brahman
Thou art Sakshi.
(Ram Ram Ram....)

Song of Hara Haro Hara

Hara Haro Hara, Hara Haro Hara, Hara Haro Hara
Hara Haro Hara, Hara Haro Hara, Hara Haro Hara

Antarai

Kathirkama Muruganukku Hara Haro Hara
Palanimalai Velanukku Hara Haro Hara
Tiruttani Vasanukku Hara Haro Hara
Tiruppuram Kundranukku Hara Haro Hara
Valli Manalanukku Hara Haro Hara
Deivayanai Samethanukku Hara Haro Hara
Tiruchendur Vadivelanukku Hara Haro Hara
Swamimalai Nathanukku Hara Haro Hara.

Song of Subrahmanya

(Hidustani Bhairavi: Rama Bhaja Gharia)

My prostrations unto Thee Subrahmanya,
(My prostrations unto Thee....)
O Son of Lord Siva, Beloved of Deivayanai
Destroyer of Sura, Lord of Palani Hills
(My prostrations unto Thee....)

O Light of lights, O Bliss
O my Life, O my Refuge
O Indweller of our hearts — Subrahmanya
(My prostrations unto Thee....)

O Sweet Honey, O Nectar
O my Joy, O my Solace,
The Self of all beings Subrahmanya
(My prostrations unto Thee....)

I take shelter in Thee, protect me, save me,
The soul of this universe, Subrahmanya,
My prostrations unto Thee — Subrahmanya.
(My prostrations unto Thee....)

Lord Muruga

(*Ninda Stuti!*)

1. Hey! Muruga, Thou art grown to be the most cruel and hot-headed monster?
Thou didst not suck the milk of one single mother
But grew up on the milk of six mothers!!
And thus developed arrogant ears, deaf to prayers
Of Bhaktas like me poor in strength, wealth and joy,
With petitions manifold and diverse, ever and anon!
Always I return despondent, mortification writ large,
All due to thy dead heart and puffed-up-pride.

2. How can I expect nobility and softness in Thee?
Thou art born in a family of direst destitution!
Thy Father lives in burning ghats!!
Thy Mother is the worst juggler in heavens and earth!!
Thy Uncle is the worst thief and a vagabond!!
Thy Brother is a swell-headed and pot-bellied glutton!!
How can I expect mercy, kindness and protection from Thee?

3. People blindly believe in Thee, the crest and jewel of all the worlds,
Both here and hereafter; how can I believe them?
When my experience belies the truth of their praises.
Thou art proclaimed as the destroyer of Asuras of Yore,
But I find Thee withholding protection for me in sorrows
Or silent, no encouragement, no hopes of future help!!
Teach me the language used in your praise
And find out the meaning of the holy word,
Which Thou Thyself imparted to Thy father Siva....
If you care... Om Saravanabhavaya Namah:

Subrahmanya Dhvani

Om Saravanabhavane	Harohara	
Om Sivasubrahmanya	Harohara	
Om Skandam Vande	Harohara	
Om Shanmukhanatha	Harohara.	Harohara....
Om Velmuruga	Harohara	
Om Velayudha	Harohara	
Om Vallivallabha	Harohara	
Om Murugaguhane	Harohara.	Harohara....
Om Karttikeya	Harohara	
Om Kathirkaamavasa	Harohara	

Om Kumaresa	Harohara	
Om Udippinatha	Harohara.	Harohara....
Om Dandayuthapani	Harohara	
Om Thirupparankundra	Harohara	
Om Thiruvannaamalai	Harohara	
Om Palani Andava	Harohara	
Om Aadinatha	Harohara	
Om Aadimoola	Harohara	
Om Aadideva	Harohara	
Om Aarumukha	Harohara	
Om Deivayanaisameta	Harohara	
Om Adhama Udhara	Harohara.	Harohara....
Om Deenabandhu	Harohara	
Om Deenanatha	Harohara	
Om Bhaktavatsala	Harohara	
Om Patitapavana	Harohara	
Om Premaprakasaka	Harohara.	Harohara....
Come Come, O! Lord	Harohara	
Give me Darshan	Harohara	
Guide me, guide me	Harohara	
Save me, save me	Harohara	
Enlighten me	Harohara	
Have mercy	Harohara	
Give me light	Harohara	
Make me pure	Harohara	
Prachodayat	Harohara	
Pahi maam Trahi maam	Harohara	
Trahi Maam Raksha Maam	Harohara.	Harohara....

APPENDIX—III

Kaavadi—The Symbol of Tapasya And Courage

Lord Shanmukha is the *Pratyaksha Devata* of this Kali Yuga. He is readily pleased with His devotees to whom He grants both Bhukti and Mukti (enjoyments here and Moksha hereafter). Millions are still living who can narrate instances in their own lives to show the miracles brought about by propitiation of Lord Shanmukha.

Perhaps the most potent propitiatory rite that a devotee of Shanmukha undertakes to perform is what is known as the *Kaavadi*. The benefits that the devotee gains from offering a Kaavadi to the Lord are a millionfold greater than the little bit of pain that the devotee inflicts upon himself.

Generally people take a vow to offer a Kaavadi to the Lord for the purpose of tiding over or averting a great calamity. For instance, if the devotee's only son is laid up with a fatal disease, he would pray to Shanmukha to grant the boy a lease of life in return for which the devotee would take a vow to dedicate a Kaavadi to Him.

Though this might, on the face of it, appear materialistic, a moment's reflection will reveal that it contains in it the seed for the Supreme God-Love. The worldly object is achieved; and the devotee offers the Kaavadi. After the ceremony, he gets so much intoxicated with the love of God that his spiritual, inner chamber is opened now. This, too, ultimately leads to Para Bhakti.

Kaavadi: From the simple shape of a weighing balance, or the street hawker's storehouse—a heavy wooden stick to rest on the shoulder, to the two ends of which are tied two baskets enclosed in cloth—the Kaavadi varies in its shape and type to the costly palanquin superstructure, profusely flower-bedecked and interwoven with peacock feathers (a feather that is of very great significance in Shanmukha worship). In all cases the Kaavadi has a good many brass bells adorning it and announcing it as the Kaavadi-bearer moves along. As, very often, the Kaavadi-bearer observes Mouna or the vow of silence, the bell alone is eloquent of the Kaavadi-procession.

Now, the two pots hanging at either end of the Kaavadi might contain rice, milk or other articles which the devotee has vowed to offer to Lord Shanmukha. The more devout among the Kaavadi-bearers and especially those who offer the Kaavadi to the Lord as a measure of propitiating the Lord for spiritual development, as a part of their Sadhana, collect these articles by begging. On foot they travel from village to village, and beg from house to house. The people offer the articles direct into the pots of the Kaavadi. The Kaavadi-bearer continues this way till the pots are full or until the avowed quantity is reached and then offers the Kaavadi to the Lord. Sometimes the devotee takes the vow that he would walk barefooted from his home to one of the shrines of Lord Shanmukha, bearing the Kaavadi and collecting the materials for the offering. He has sometimes to walk nearly one hundred miles! Those who offer milk, rice or any article into this Kaavadi also receive the Lord's blessings.

Kaavadi-bearer: The Kaavadi-bearer has to observe various *Niyamas* (rules) between the time he takes up the Kaavadi and the day of offering. He has to perform elaborate ceremonies at the time of assuming the Kaavadi and at the time of offering it to the Lord. He also puts on the dress of a *Pandaaram*—or Saivite mendicant. It consists of a saffron-coloured cloth, a scarlet conical cap and a cane silver capped on both ends. Lord Siva Himself is a Supreme Pandaaram. He Himself loves to wander in this dress. Therefore the dress is holy for the Saivite. The Pandaaram has to live on Bhiksha (alms) only. The Kaavadi-bearer's bare chest is covered over with several Rudraksha-malas.

The Kaavadi-bearer observes celibacy. He takes Sattvic food; and abstains from all sorts of intoxicating drinks and drugs. He continuously dwells in the thought of the Lord.

Many of the Kaavadi-bearers, especially those who do it as Sadhana, impose various sorts of self-torture upon themselves. They pass a sharp, little 'Vel' (Shanmukha's Spear) through their tongue which is made to protrude out of the mouth. Or, they pass a 'Vel' through the cheeks. This

sort of piercing is done on other parts of the body also. This is indeed a great Vrata, equal in merit to Chandrayana and Krichhra Vratas.

The Kaavadi-bearer does not shave himself; he grows beard. He eats only once a day.

The 'Vel' pierced through his tongue or cheeks reminds him constantly of Lord Shanmukha; it prevents him from speaking. It gives him great power of endurance.

In all cases, the Kaavadi procession terminates in an elaborate, colourful and inspiring ceremony. The priests chant various hymns in praise of Lord Shanmukha. Incense is burnt. Drums are beaten. Musical instruments are played. The devotee himself is in a high state of religious fervour. He dances in ecstasy. His very appearance is awe-inspiring; there is *Divya Tejas* on his face. Devotees often experience *Bhava Samadhi*; or they get *Shanmukha-Avesha* when the Deity enters their body and possesses him for some time.

Agni Kaavadi: This is the most difficult Kaavadi-offering. With the Kaavadi hanging on his shoulders the devotee walks through a pit of coals of fire. Hymns are sung in praise of the Lord all around the pit. Drums are beaten. Incense is burnt. The entire atmosphere is awe-inspiring. The real devotee gets into a state of ecstasy and easily walks over the fire.

The Glory of Kaavadi: As a Sadhana, Kaavadi is a beautiful synthesis of Bhakti-Hatha-Raja Yogas. The devotee, especially if he is not already a Bhikshu or monk, is made to beg from door to door often in known and also in unknown villages. Sincere Bhaktas readily offer the Bhiksha; there are those who would drive him away also. The devotee thus gets the chances of crushing and powdering his ego and developing mental power of endurance. For His sake he is prepared to undergo any privation and humiliation. The wandering Parivrajaka life gives him an inkling of the magnitude of human suffering and steels his heart to resist the allurements of the flesh. Pure Sattvic diet adds to the Sattvic content of his mind. Celibacy strengthens his will and clarifies his understanding. The not-very-good appearance in which he roams about convinces him that appearances are deceptive and kindles Viveka in him. The aspirant learns the glory of Mauna also. Above all, constant remembrance of the Lord intensifies his devotion to Him every minute.

Those who offer the Kaavadi to the Lord for spiritual progress soon attain Him. Those who do so for the purpose of achieving some earthly things soon acquire Shanmukha-Bhakti which in time flowers into Maha Bhava leading to Sayujya with Lord Shanmukha.

Lord Shanmukha, the Commander-in-Chief of the Devas, the Almighty Son of Lord Siva, is easily propitiated through this Kaavadi-offering which calls for endurance, courage and one-pointed devotion to Him. He who goes through the austerity of Kaavadi-offering is surely a Dheera or hero. Such Dheeras are the beloved of Lord Shanmukha Who showers His choicest blessings on them, bestows on them the inner eye of intuition and draws them unto Himself.

Glory to Kaavadi which is the symbol of Shanmukha Bhakti! Glory to the Kaavadi-bearers!
Glory to Lord Shanmukha!

APPENDIX—IV

Bibliography

Skanda Purana: Of the 18 Puranas, the Skanda Purana deals with the Avatara and Lilas of Lord Skanda (the second son of Lord Siva) and His victory over the Asura king, Surapadma. It also narrates the story of His marriage with Valli and Deivayanai. It extols the glory of Lord Skanda and His greatness and brings out the various attributes and functions of the Lord. Every episode narrated in the Purana has got an esoteric significance. Devotees and Bhaktas of Lord Subrahmanya have this text for their constant Svadhyaya.

Scriptures relating to Lord Skanda can be had in abundance in Tamil literature. In fact, Lord Subrahmanya is worshipped not only as the Lord of Nature but also as the Lord who gave the Tamil language to Agastya Rishi. Amongst the oldest extant Tamil works in *Thirumurugatruppada* (guidance for an aspirant to the worship and attainment of Lord Skanda). The author of this book is Nakeerar, a famous poet of the olden days. One who studies this book daily and does Puja of the Lord, gets purged of all sins and attains everything, both in this world and in the next.

Saint Arunagirinathar has given us sixteen thousand songs in praise of Lord Shanmukha, though only about 1,300 are now available. These songs are known as *Thiruppugazh* (Praise of the Lord). Every song is elevating and soul-stirring. The same saint has given to the world other books namely, *Kandar Anubhuti* (Experience of God, and how to attain it) and *Kandar Alankaram*. The former has so much efficacy that its constant repetition with faith and love bestows every blessing that one can ask for.

In a later period, another Saint, Kumaragurupara Swamigal, composed a long poem in praise of Lord Shanmukha. This is known as *Kandar Kali Venba*. There are also other poems known as Pillay Tamil.

Verses of this type deal with the aspect of Skanda from His infancy upto His marriage with Valli and Deivayanai. *Kandar Kavacham*, *Kandar Shasthi Kavacham*, *Vel Pathikam* and *Kilikanni* songs (by Mariappa Swamigal) of modern days extol the Avatara and Lilas of Lord Skanda. They are all valuable books for Shanmukha Bhaktas for their constant study and inspiration.

May you all obtain His Grace through constant study of the books on Lord Subrahmanya!
May His blessings be upon you all!