

Brahmā informed Agni about the birth of the child and the latter, in great happiness, hastened to it on a fast goat. Gaṅgā who met Agni on the way and asked him about his hurried trip was told about the birth of the child and between the two developed an argument about the ownership of the child. Mahāviṣṇu who came that way just then listened to the above argument and directed them to Śiva for settlement of their claims.

Agni and Gaṅgā asked Śiva to which of them the child really belonged. Śiva then told Pārvatī "Fortunate, fortunate." Only after seeing the child could it be decided as to whose it was and so Śiva, Pārvatī, Agni and Gaṅgā proceeded together to the forest where they saw the child in the lap of the Kṛttikās. Śiva then said "Let us see whom the child looks at before settling its parentage." Understanding the ideas of the visitors the child, by its yogic power, assumed four bodies called Kumāra, Viśākha, Śākha and Naigameya. Kumāra looked at Śiva, Viśākha at Pārvatī, Śākha at Gaṅgā and Naigameya at Agni and all of them felt immensely happy. The Kṛttikās asked Śiva whether Ṣaṅmukha (child with six faces) was his son to which Śiva answered as follows : "Let him be your son under the name Kārttikeya; Gaṅgā's son under the name Kumāra; Pārvatī's son under the name Skanda; my son under the name Guha and Agni's son with the name Mahāsena and under the name Śaravaṇa 'Śaravaṇa's (the forest where it was born) son. He is a great yogī and will be known by these various names. As he possesses six faces he will become famous as 'Ṣaṅmukha' also.

After having spoken thus Śiva thought of the Devas and under the leadership of Brahmā and Viṣṇu all the Devas appeared there. They looked at the child to their hearts' content and then told Śiva thus : "Oh ! Lord ! You made Agni serve the purpose of Devas. Let us immediately start for Aujasa tīrtha and crown Ṣaṅmukha at Sarasvatī in Kurukṣetra. Let him flourish as army-chief of Devas, Gandharvas and Kinnaras and let him kill the terrible Mahiṣāsura and Tārakāsura.

3) *Coronation.* Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva and others reached Kurukṣetra with the child to crown him (Subrahmaṇya) as army-chief. Śiva and Viṣṇu performed the consecration ceremony with holy water from the seven seas. Gandharvas, Ṛṣis and others sang for joy and Apsarās danced. Pārvatī placed the child thus consecrated on her lap and kissed him repeatedly on the head.

4) *Presents.* After Guha's consecration, the Devas presented the army-chief valorous armies. He was given by Śiva four Pramathas, equal in prowess to Indra, called Ghaṅṭākarna, Lohitākṣa, Nandiṣeṇa and Kumudamālī. Brahmā and other Devas gave their own Pramathas to him. Brahmā gave him the Pramatha called Sthāṇu and Viṣṇu gave him three sets of Pramathas called Saṅkrama, Vikrama and Parākrama. Indra gave him Utkleśa and Paṅkaja; Sun (Sūrya) gave Daṇḍakapīñjalas; Moon gave Maṇivasumaṇis; the Aśvins gave Vatsanandis etc. In short, important Devas, Mātṛs, Tīrthas etc. gave Subrahmaṇya price-less presents too numerous to be named.

Seeing the rush of presents the great Garuḍa presented his own son, the fast-going Peacock to Subrahmaṇya. Aruṇa gave his own son, the cock. Agni gave the Vel (three-pronged weapon, trident), Brhaspati the daṇḍa (club, stick) Gaṅgā, the Kamaṇḍalu (water-pot of

Sannyāsins) Viṣṇu the garland, Pārvatī clothes, Śiva the locket and Indra the string of pearls.

5) *Devāsura war.* The consecration of Subrahmaṇya as Commander-in-Chief of the army kindled a new hope and enthusiasm in the Devas. They challenged the Asuras for war and they took it up. The asura army entered the battle-field under the leadership of unrivalled warriors like Tārakāsura, Mahiṣa, Bāṇa, son of Mahābali, Tāraka's sons, Tārakākṣa, Kamalākṣa, Vidyunmālī etc. In the furious battle that ensued Subrahmaṇya killed Tārakāsura. The other asura chiefs too were killed.

6) *Vow of celibacy.* After the killing of Tārakāsura Subrahmaṇya became the object of too much of petting by Pārvatī with the result that his life became unbridled and wayward. His lust was everyday on the increase and he committed even rape on Deva women, who were ultimately forced to complain about him to Pārvatī. Immediately she called Subrahmaṇya to her and showed her own image in all other women and he became so much repentant about his past actions that he took the vow before Pārvatī that in future he would look upon all women in the world as equal to her, his mother. (Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa 81).

7) *Marriage.* See under Devasenā.

(Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Canto 36; M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 223; Anuśāsana Parva, Chapter 85; Skanda Purāṇa, Sambhava kāṇḍa; Kathāsaritāsāgara, Lāvāṇa-kalambaka, Taraṅga 6; Uttara Rāmāyaṇa Kamba Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa; Vāmana Purāṇa, Chapters 57-61; Bhaviṣya Purāṇa).

8) *Other information.*

(i) On the occasion of the burning of the Khāṇḍava forest Subrahmaṇya went there carrying his weapon called 'Śakti' to fight Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 226, Verse 33).

(ii) Skanda was born from the semen of Śiva which fell into Agni. So he got the name Skanda. (Skand—fall). (M.B. Vana Parva, Chapter 225, Verse 16).

(iii) He once cut asunder the Krauñca mountain. (For details see under Krauñca I).

(iv) Noticing the very great effulgence of Skanda, Indra feared loss of his place and immediately he clashed with the former. Indra's Vajra (thunderbolt) hit Skanda on his right and from the wound emerged a person wearing golden armour, divine ear-rings and holding the Vel in his hands and he was named Viśākha. Frightened by his sight Indra sought refuge with Subrahmaṇya. (Vana Parva, Chapter 227).

(v) When he married Devasenā his six mothers came and blessed him and his wife; he then told the mothers thus : "You live with my father, Śiva. Until I become sixteen years of age I will be functioning as a spirit which kills children and the children killed by me will serve as your food." As soon as he finished speaking, a terrible person just like Agni emerged from his body and it was called Raudragraha, which is known also by other names such as Skandāpasmāra, Sakunigraha, Pūtanāgraha etc. This Graha is supposed to cause children's death. (Vana Parva, Chapter 230).

(vi) Subrahmaṇya once in the company of Rudradeva visited the holy place Bhadravaṭa. (Vana Parva, Chapter 231, Verse 56).

(vii) Vāyubhagavān assumed responsibility for his protection. (Vana Parva, Chapter 231, Verse 56).