



वैदिक इंदिया

This series takes a close look at facets of Vedic India that are alive even today.



इशरद गणेश (part two)

This article is a researched article and borrows heavily from printed and electronic encyclopedias as well as material provided by our panel of research scholars, astrologers, academics and pundits.

This essay is in continuation to the previous month's essay on Lord Ganesha. It consists of two parts. One part discusses Kartikeya, the elder brother of lord Ganesha and the other part discusses Lalbaugcha Raja – the most famous of the lord Ganesha idols worshipped during Ganesh Chaturti.

Kartikeya, the second son of Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati is known by many names - Subramaniam, Sanmukha, Shadanana, Skanda and Guha. In some of the southern states of India, Kartikeya is a popular deity and is better known as Murugan. Hindu mythology has several stories about Ganesha and his brother Karthikeya. Where Ganpati is revered all over India, Karthikeya's influence is predominant in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu, where he is also known as Murugan, Subramanya or Arumugham.



Thirupparankundram Murugan Temple

Like many Hindu myths, stories of the Ganesha-Kartikeya interactions are of a childlike simplicity yet imbued with lessons for mankind. Once, a mango infused with divine knowledge was brought to Mount Kailas in the Himalayas where Shiva and Parvati hold court. Since only one individual could consume the fruit, a race was proposed between their two sons - whoever circumambulated the planet thrice and returned first would win the fruit. Confident that his peacock would outrace Ganesha's mouse, Kartikeya vroomed off into space. Ganesha, on the other hand, simply folded his palms in prayer and walked around his seated parents returning to his starting point before Kartikeya. The reason? Shiva and Parvati contain the world within them; walking around his parents is equivalent to actually going around the earth. He won the fruit but then magnanimously offered it to his sulking brother.

The birth of Kartikeya has many legendary stories. In the Skanda Purana, it is narrated that Shiva first married Sati or Dakshayani, the daughter of Daksha. Daksha never liked Shiva and insulted Shiva in public at a Yajna ceremony. Sati could not take the insult of her husband and immolated herself. After Shiva's first wife, Sati died, her divine body parts were strewn all over India (all the places where the parts landed became Shakti pithas, or "seats of the Goddess," which are now sites of Devi temples) -- and Shiva completely turned his back on the world, resuming the life of an ascetic in a remote Himalayan cave, while the demon Taraka overran the heavens and earth below.

Shiva had no interest in the world so the gods prayed to Shakti to reincarnate and



Lord Kartikeya

turn Shiva back towards the world thereby restoring the Cosmic balance. Shakti agreed and thereupon took birth as Parvati, daughter of Himavan, Lord of the Mountains with a mission to lure Shiva out of his asceticism and take him as her consort. Thus, every day she would visit Shiva's cave, sweep the floor, decorate it with flowers and offer him fruits and other gifts of the earth, hoping to win his love. Shiva however, never even opened his eyes to notice.

Around this time, Surapadman, the rakshasa was devastating the earth and torturing the people. The gods realized that only the son born of Shiva could lead them to victory over Surapadman and the demon army. They planned with Kamadeva, the god of love to shoot a flower arrow at Shiva,



◀ continued from page 9



The Lord Murugan temple inside the Kapaleswarar temple Chennai

as he sat in meditation, so that he would fall in love with Parvati. Just as Kamadeva was about to shoot his arrow, lord Shiva opened his third eye and destroyed Kamadeva with fire and turned him to ashes. "Do not despair," Parvati told the gods when this happened. "Shiva will become my consort. And when he does, Kama will be reborn."

The fire which came out from Shiva was so intolerable that even Agni, the fire god could not bear it. The fire was then transported by the river Ganga into the Saravana forest into a pool Saravana Poigai. There, from the sparks of the fire were born six children. Goddess Parvati united the six babies into one with six faces, and named the child Kartikeya. For this reason Kartikeya is also called Kumara, meaning youth. He is considered eternally young and hence is called Kumara.

When Kartikeya grew up, he was declared the commander-in-chief of the devas. He was called Deva Senapathi. Under his leadership, demigods could slay the demons Banasura, Tarakasura and Pralambasura. He was chief of the army protecting Narada's yagna and also tunneled through the mountain Krauncha.

Kartikeya honored all the gods who helped in the elimination of the Rakshasas. He also released all the gods who had been imprisoned by Shurapadma. Whatever treasure had been looted and brought from different places was all sent back to those places. With the help of the divine engineer Vishwakarma, all the buildings, gardens and cities destroyed and burnt by the Rakshasas were rebuilt. Kartikeya seated Indra safely on the throne of Heaven. He also saw to it

that everyone lived in peace and happiness, following the path of virtue. Shiva praised the valor of Kumara.

It is Kartikeya who brought into vogue the performance of sacrifices without the killing of animals. Kartikeya is represented as a god mounted on his Vahana, the Peacock carrying the weapon, the Vel. He is sometimes depicted with many weapons including a sword, a spike, a scepter, a discus and a bow although

he is usually depicted wielding a sakti or spear. This signifies Kartikeya's purification of human ills. His spike symbolizes protection, discus portrays his knowledge of the truth, the mace represents his strength and the bow is a sign of his ability to defeat all ills. His peacock mount symbolizes his destruction of the ego. The six heads of Kartikeya are represented as the six Siddhis granted to yogis over the course of their spiritual development.

It seems that in ancient times the worship of Kartikeya was more widespread. Patanjali refers to his images in homes and temples. The coins of Kushan kings bear his name and he was worshipped by the Gupta kings in the whole of northern India. He was also

the favorite deity of the Chalukya dynasty kings. In southern India, he is still widely worshipped. Several deities of the south are associated with him, eg. Murugan (the chaste boy), Velam (the spear-bearer) and Seyyavan (the red one).

On the last evening of the month of Kartik, the clay image of god Kartikeya is worshipped and on the next day the idol is submerged in the river. At every great festival associated with mother goddess Durga, his image is also made and set up by her side. Many people, especially females worship this god to have a male offspring.

Major temples devoted to Lord Kartikeya are known as 'Aaru Padai Veedu' which are located at Pazhamudircholai, Swami Mala, Thirucendur, Thiruparankundram, Palani, Pazhamudircholai and Thiruthani. Lord Kartikeya is known as Kartik in the eastern parts of the country especially in Orissa and West Bengal. Lord Kartikeya is portrayed with 2 consorts in south Indian temples - Devasena, the celestial princess and daughter of Lord Indra - and Valli, hunter king Nambirajan's daughter.

In the Brahma Vaivarta Purana, he is represented as the elder son of Shiva and Ganesha is represented as the younger son. In South India, it is believed that he is the younger of the two.

continued on page 11 ▶



Tiruchendur Murugan Temple



◀ continued from page 10

Lalbugcha Raja

Lalbugcha Raja - Mumbai

Though Mumbai city has over 1.75 lakh residential Ganeshas and over 10,000 Ganesh pandals, no discussion on Lord Ganesha can be complete without the mention of Lalbugcha Raja. Lalbugcha Raja is one of the most popular Ganesh Pandals in Mumbai. Located at Lalbug in Mumbai, the Ganesha idol erected here during Ganeshotsav is popularly known as Lalbugcha Raja. It is said that Lalbugcha Raja has a majestic divinity to him. Any wish you make of Lalbugcha Raja will be fulfilled. Reportedly over 20 lakh devotees visited Lalbugcha Raja this year.

On the first day of the festival, the idol is dressed in pitambar or yellow dhoti, along with a stole and a kamar patta or waist belt. The dhoti alone needs 39 metres of cloth, the stole and waist belt are about six metres long, the equivalent of a saree's length. The idol wears a similar set of clothes every day. The dress is changed twice every day — once at 3 a.m. and again at 3 p.m. Twenty-three sets of clothes are required for 11 days of the festival. Apart from the clothing, the idol is also adorned with about seven to eight kilograms of gold. The main attraction here is a golden crown of 2 kg, golden bracelets and other gold ornaments. A special room near the pandal is set aside to store the colourful attire. The room is out of bounds for everyone except the senior mandal officials and the tailor who stitches the clothes and supervises each costume change.

The Mandal was founded in the year 1928. The market place at Peru Chawl was shut down in 1932. The fishermen and vendors who used to sit in the open place prayed to Lord Ganesha for a permanent place for their market. The landlord, Rajabai Tayyabali agreed to give a plot for the construction of a market. On fulfillment of their wish, the fisherman and the traders established the Ganesha Idol on 12.09.1934. The idol was dressed in the customary fashion of fishermen. Since that day onwards, Lord Ganesha has become popular as he fulfills the wishes of devotees.

The devotees often stand in a 7 to 12-



Lalbugcha Raja, 2010

kilometer long queue for 15-16 hours on the road, braving the sun and rains to have darshan. This year however, the trust got permission from the BMC and MHADA to use two grounds belonging to these agencies. The grounds are located behind the pandal where the Ganesha idol stands. Complete air-conditioning was arranged so

drinking water. The enclosure also had a 24-hour intensive care unit managed by doctors and medical attendants.

Visarjan Tarafa: The trust had applied for the patent before the Controller General of Patents Designs and Trademarks at the beginning of the just-concluded festival. The mandal has also obtained 'geographical indication' in the name of the deity. This means, temples and other mandals cannot be named after the pandal. The trust initiated the move after many businesses sought to name their products after the deity. The entities took advantage of the popularity and auspiciousness associated with the idol. They recently came across a firm that used pictures of the Lalbugcha Raja on boxes containing modaks.

The name 'Lalbugcha Raja' has thus become the exclusive intellectual property of the Lalbugcha Raja Sarvajanic Ganeshotsav Mandal. This means nobody can use the image and name of the Lalbug Ganesha for commercial benefits without the trust's permission. The trust said they applied for the patent after media reports of a website that fraudulently sought donations in the name of the Shri Sai Sansthan Shirdi. ■



After consulting experts, the Mandal has purchased a Tarafa (Iron Raft) which makes it possible to dissolve the idol of Lalbugcha Raja in deep sea water conveniently. Picture Immersion shows Lalbugcha Raja being immersed in the tarafa.

that the devotees did not suffer needless hardship as they have had to do so far. The air-conditioned pavilion was spread over 60,000 sq ft across the two adjoining grounds and accommodated 12,000-14,000 people at a time. Devotees were also served free snacks, tea and packaged