



Skanda Cult and Its Historical Background a Canonical Study

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Abstract:

Subramanya is almost exclusively a South Indian deity. There are few temples dedicated to him in Western India, except the one at Abbottabad in the Hazara District (now in Pakistan). Contrary to this, there is not a village, however small, which does not possess a shrine for Subramanya in South India. In fact the popularity of the deity with the South Indian is so great as to induce him to build shrines for him in all places, such as towns, villages, gardens, mountain tops, and other odd places. There are not many temples dedicated to Subramanya exclusively in Kerala, but he is worshipped along with God Siva in almost all villages of the State. According to Gopinath Rao, the seated figure of Subramanya is either on a Padmasana or on a peacock. It is laid down as a rule that if the figure is a seated one, it should have only two arms, if a standing one four, and lastly, if it is seated upon a peacock, it may have six, eight, or twelve arms. Subramanya's dwarapalakas (gate-keepers) are Surya and Siva, (who is the same as Agni or Rudra). A dhya-sloka current in some parts of South India actually describes him as Surya. All these facts clearly point to the Sun-myth as the origin of Subramanya; his six heads perhaps represent the six ritus or seasons, the twelve arms, the twelve months; the kukuta or the bowl the harbinger of the rising sun and the peacock whose feathers display a marvellous blending of all colours represent the luminous glory of the sun; the Saktayudha is also of solar origin. According to the Sritatvanidhi, Kartikeya should have one face with three eyes, ten arms, and the complexion of the rising sun. There should be a fruit (or leaf) of the bilva tree on the head and on the right hands the sula, the chetya and ankusa and the vajra and varada. He should have his peacock vehicle by his side. The complexion of this aspect of Subramanya should also be that of the rising sun. Shanmukha: The colour of Shanmukha should be that of Kumkuma (saffron) and he should be seated on the peacock. Desika-Subramanya: This is the aspect on which Subramanya taught Siva, his own father, the significance of the sacred syllable om. As a teacher he should be represented as possessing one face, six arms and as seated upon the peacock. According to Dowson, Kartikeya was born for the purpose of destroying Taraka, a Daitya, whose austerities had made him formidable to the gods. He is represented riding a peacock called Paravani, holding a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other. His wife is Kumari or Sena.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE ADVENT OF SKANDA

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.

Kumāra-Skanda-Kārttikeya in Vedic literature

The evolution of Kumāra-Skanda-Kārttikeya who, during later times developed into one of the popular and prominent members of the Hindu pantheon, takes its origin from Vedic times. The tradition commences from the *Rigveda* where Kumāra appears as related to god Agni as his father, a feature carried forward down the tradition. Thus *Rigveda* 5.2.1-3 mention Kumāra as endowed with golden teeth and golden complexion who had been secreted by his mother in a cave (*guhā*) -- a feature current in later tradition also -- out of sight of his father 1. Again, Agni is said to have seven auspicious mothers (*RV* 1. 141.2) 2 and also born of seven mothers 3, aspects which betray resemblances to the purānic Skanda.

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 anymore. 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 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 Karapatra 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. 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.

II. SKANDA AND HIS MISSION

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, Ganesh, 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.

III. WORSHIP OF SKANDA IN SOUTH INDIA

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 sector 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.

IV. ASURA SAMHARA

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.

V. SKANDA -MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE ENERGY

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 Iliad 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 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."

VI. THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF SKANDA

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 Purgatorio 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.

VII. CONCLUSION

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

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