

Sri Murugan/Kartikeyan, Valli & Devayani

MURUGAN/KARTIKEYA:

Muruga, a popular Hindu deity is worshipped primarily among tamils in South India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia. Like most Hindu deities, he is known by many other names, including Senthil, Kārthikeya ('son of Krittika'), Saravanabava (emerged from lake Saravana), Arumugam or Shanmukha ('one with six faces'), Kumāra ('child or son'), Guha, Skanda ('that which is spilled or oozed, namely seed' in Sanskrit), Subrahmanya, Vēlan (who bears the spear 'Vel') and Swaminatha (as a guru who preached Shiva).

Muruga as evidenced by the three first letters: MU -- Mukundan (Vishnu), RU -- Rudra (Siva) and KA -- Kamalan (Brahma).contains in himself the three divine eternal functions: creation (sristi), protection (sthithi) and destruction (samhara). Muruga's three integral elements are his spear (Vel), peacock his mount and the cock adorning his banner. The Vel, signifies jñanasakti (power of wisdom); given by his mother Parvathi, wishing him victory over Surapadma. The peacock (represents bindu) displays the divine shape of Omkara when it spreads its magnificent plumes into a full-blown circular form, while the cock (representing nada) proclaims loudly the Pranava sound OM.

The epic Skanda Purana, created by Veda Vyasa, vividly narrates the circumstances which led to the divine 'appearance' of Muruga. He 'rose' to protect gods who were subject to extreme torment and cruelty by demon Surapadma. They all appealed collectively to Lord Siva to come to their rescue. Moved by their plight, Siva willed to bring forth a powerful divine personality, an element of himself, but yet distinct from him, who would have unparalleled bravery and who alone would be able to slay Surapadma and his clan. The extremely powerful spark which emanated from His third eye was carried by the Fire God (Agni) and was deposited in Saravana ('stand of reeds') Lake; there arose six cute tiny tots who were looked after by six Krittika maidens; which later united to become a single Six-Faced Child with resplendent beauty. Added to Siva's five faces Sadhyojata, Vamadeva, Aghora, Tatpura and Ishana was Adhormurka; thus Shanmukha.

Muruga's abodes (mostly hilltops) are countless, among which six are prominent known as "Aaru Padai Veedugall" (six abodes), located in Tamilnadu. Each abode has its own history as portrayed by Nakkeerar in Thirumurugatruppada and describes the intelligence, romance and valor of Lord Muruga. The six abodes are

1. Thirupparamkudram: Marriage of Muruga with Devayanai
2. Thiruchendur: only abode that is a sea resort, where he won the battle against Surapadma.
3. Thiruvavinankudi (Palani): Muruga as 'aandi' after he was denied the 'Gnanapazham' (wisdom fruit)
4. Thiruverakam (Swami Malai): as a guru preached his father the meaning of

pranava manthra (Om)

5. Kundruthoraadal (Thiruttani and several other hills): appears with his divine consorts Valli and Devayanai and
6. Pazhamuthircholai: appears with Valli and Devayanai.

VALLI & DEVAYANI:

Muruga's consorts are Valli and Devayani. They represent Inch Sakti and Krill Sakti. In fact they are Sundaravalli and Amudavalli, born out of the tears of joy of Narayana during his incarnation as Trivikrama. Both did intense penance with the object of attaining the status as Muruga's consorts. Pleased with their prayers, Muruga appeared before them and ordained that Amudavalli be born in Devaloka as Indra's daughter, while Sundaravalli would take birth on the earth in a hunter tribe. The Lord promised to marry both Valli and Devayani. The marriage of Muruga and Devayani took place at Tirupparankundram with full Vedic rites. Devayani was in fact gifted to Muruga by Devendra in great acknowledgment of heroism and valor displayed by Muruga as the supreme commander. Deva Senapati (General of the Gods) thus became Devasena Pati (Husband of Devasena).



Muruga's wedding with Valli has many interesting interludes. Valli was brought up by King Nambi Rajah of Chittoor, the head of the hunter tribe. In tune with the hunter tribe custom, her father sent her to 'tinaippunam' (tinai [millet] field) to keep vigil and protect the crop from birds until harvest. It was at this time that Valli attained guru diksha from sage Narada who advised her that Muruga would be an ideal match for her. Narada then continued to nearby Tiruttani where the Lord was in repose mood after the fierce battle (with Surapadma). The sage reminded Muruga about his promise to marry Valli.

Muruga's leela began now. He first appeared as a hunter and was rejected by Valli. He then took the form of a trembling old man, pretending to be hungry, and ate millet flour and honey mixture offered by Valli. He then proposed to marry her only to be chased away. Finally, Muruga invoked the blessings of his elder brother Ganesha for the success of his mission. On his younger brother's appeal, Ganesha appeared as a wild elephant in the forest and began to chase Valli. Terrified by the menacing advance, Valli ran for protection and ran straight into the arms of Muruga.

When Lord Muruga came to Tiruttani hill after his wedding with Valli at Vallimalai, she pressed him to enlighten her on the importance and greatness of the hill. In reply, Lord Muruga said that if one worshipped him with heart and soul for five consecutive days in the hill temple, one would be blessed with the best in this life and the lives to follow.