

# Kartikeya

**Kartikeya** (Sanskrit: कार्तिकेय, IAST: *Kārttikeya*), also known as **Skanda**, **Kumara**,<sup>[6]</sup> **Murugan**, **Mahasena**, **Shanmukha** and **Subrahmanya**, is the Hindu god of war.<sup>[7][8][9]</sup> He is a son of Parvati and Shiva, brother of Ganesha, and a god whose life story has many versions in Hinduism.<sup>[10]</sup> An important deity in the Indian subcontinent since ancient times, Kartikeya is particularly popular and predominantly worshipped in South India, Sri Lanka and Malaysia as Murugan.<sup>[7][8][10]</sup>

Kartikeya is an ancient god, traceable to the Vedic era. Archaeological evidence from 1st-century CE and earlier,<sup>[11]</sup> where he is found with Hindu god Agni (fire), suggest that he was a significant deity in early Hinduism.<sup>[7]</sup> He is found in many medieval temples all over India, such as at the Ellora Caves and Elephanta Caves.<sup>[12]</sup>

The iconography of Kartikeya varies significantly; he is typically represented as an ever-youthful man, riding or near an Indian Peacock, called Paravani,<sup>[13]</sup> dressed with weapons sometimes with a rooster in the flag he holds. Most icons show him with one head, but some show him with six heads reflecting the legend surrounding his birth.<sup>[7][8][10]</sup> He grows up quickly into a philosopher-warrior, destroys evil in the form of demon Taraka, teaches the pursuit of ethical life and the theology of Shaiva Siddhanta.<sup>[8][9]</sup> He has inspired many poet-saints, such as Arunagirinathar.<sup>[9][14]</sup>

Kartikeya is found as a primary deity in temples wherever communities of the Tamil people live worldwide, particularly in Tamil Nadu state of India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa and Réunion. Three of the six richest and busiest temples in Tamil Nadu are dedicated to him.<sup>[9]</sup> The Kataragama temple dedicated to him in Sri Lanka attracts Tamils, Sinhalese people and the Vedda people.<sup>[11]</sup> He is also found in other parts of India, sometimes as Skanda, but in a secondary role along with Ganesha, Parvati and Shiva.<sup>[8]</sup>

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God of War and Victory  
Commander of the Gods



Statue of Kartikeya in Batu Caves temple

**Other names** Murugan, Subramanya, Kumara, Skanda, Saravana, Shadanana, Devasenapati, Shanmukha, Guha

**Affiliation** Deva

**Abode** Mount Kailash

**Planet** Mangala

#### Mantra

- *Oṃ Saravaṇa Bhava Om Saravaṇa Bhavāya Namaḥ*<sup>[1]</sup>
- *Kandanukku Arohara Vetrivel Muruganukku Arohara*<sup>[2]</sup>

**Weapon** Vel · bow and arrow

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<b>Animals</b>	<u>Indian Peacock</u> , <u>rooster</u> and <u>snake</u> <sup>[3]</sup>
<b>Day</b>	<u>Tuesday</u>
<b>Color</b>	<u>Red</u>
<b>Mount</b>	<u>Peacock</u>
<b>Gender</b>	<u>Male</u>
<b>Festivals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <u>Skanda Sashti</u> or <u>Shashthi</u></li><li>▪ <u>Thaipusam</u></li><li>▪ <u>Karthikai Deepam</u></li><li>▪ <u>Kartik Purnima</u></li></ul>
<b>Personal information</b>	
<b>Parents</b>	<u>Shiva</u> (father) <u>Parvati</u> (mother)
<b>Siblings</b>	<u>Ganesha</u> (brother)
<b>Consort</b>	<u>Devasena</u> or <u>Devayanai</u> and <u>Valli</u> <sup>[note 1]</sup>

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## Etymology and nomenclature

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Sculpture of the god Skanda, from Kannauj, North India, circa 8th century.

Kartikeya is known by numerous names in ancient and medieval texts of the Indian culture. Most common among these are Murugan, Kumara, Skanda, and Subrahmanya. Others include Aaiyyan, Cheyyon, Senthil, Vēlaṇ, Swaminatha ("ruler of the gods", from *-natha king*), śaravaṇabhava ("born amongst the reeds"), Arumugam or ṣaṇmukha ("six-faced"),<sup>[15]</sup> Dandapani ("wielder of the mace", from *-pani hand*), Guha (cave, secret) or *Guruguha* (cave-teacher), Kadhirvelan, Kandhan, Vishakha and Mahasena.<sup>[16]</sup> In ancient coins where the inscription has survived along with his images, his names appear as Kumara, Brahmanya or Brahmanyadeva.<sup>[17]</sup> On some ancient Indo-Scythian coins, his names appear in Greek script as Skanda, Kumara and Vishaka.<sup>[18]</sup> In ancient statues, he appears as Mahasena, Skanda and Vishakha.<sup>[19]</sup>

Skanda is derived from *skanḍr-*, which means "leaper or attacker".<sup>[20]</sup> In Kalidasa's epic poem *Kumarasambhava* ("The Birth of the War God"; 5th century CE), as in most versions of the story, the gods wished for Skanda to be born in order to destroy the demon Taraka, who had been granted a boon that he could be killed only by a son of Shiva. They sent Parvati to induce Shiva to marry her. Shiva, however, was lost in meditation and was

not attracted to Parvati until he was struck by an arrow from the bow of Kama, the god of love, whom he immediately burned to ashes. After many years of abstinence, Shiva's seed was so strong that the gods, fearing the result, sent Agni, the god of fire, to interrupt Shiva's amorous play with Parvati. Agni received the seed and dropped it into the Ganges, where Skanda was born.<sup>[21]</sup>

Kartikeya means "of the Krittikas".<sup>[8]</sup> This epithet is also linked to his birth. After he appears on the banks of the River Ganges, he is seen by the six of the seven brightest stars cluster in the night sky called *Krittikas* in Hindu texts (called *Pleiades* in Greek texts). These six mothers all want to take care of him and nurse baby Kartikeya. Kartikeya ends the argument by growing five more heads to have a total of six heads so he can look at all six mothers, and let them each nurse one.<sup>[8][22]</sup> The **six Krittikas** are Śiva, Sambhūti, Prīti, Sannati, Anasūya and Kṣamā.<sup>[23]</sup>

## Textual references

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### Ancient

There are ancient references which can be interpreted to be Kartikeya in the Vedic texts, in the works of Pāṇini (~500 BCE), in the Mahabhasya of Patanjali and in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.<sup>[24]</sup> For example, the term *Kumara* appears in hymn 5,2 of the *Rig Veda*.<sup>[25][note 2]</sup> The *Kumara* of verse 5.2.1 can be interpreted as Skanda, or just any "boy". However, the rest of the verses depict the "boy" as bright-colored, hurling weapons and other motifs that later have been associated with Skanda. The difficulty with interpreting these to be Skanda is that Indra, Agni and Rudra are also depicted in similar terms and as warriors.<sup>[26]</sup>

The Skanda-like motifs found in *Rig Veda* are found in other Vedic texts, such as section 6.1-3 of the *Shatapatha Brahmana*.<sup>[27]</sup> In these, the mythology is very different for *Kumara*, as Agni is described to be the *Kumara* whose mother is *Ushas* (goddess Dawn) and whose father is Purusha.<sup>[25]</sup> The section 10.1 of the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* mentions *Sanmukha* (six faced one), while the *Baudhayana Dharmasutra* mentions a householder's rite of passage that involves prayers to Skanda with his brother Ganapati (Ganesha) together.<sup>[28]</sup> The chapter 7 of the *Chandogya Upanishad* (~800–600 BCE) equates Sanat-Kumara (eternal son) and Skanda, as he teaches sage *Narada* to discover his own *Atman* (soul, self) as a means to the ultimate knowledge, true peace and liberation.<sup>[29][30][note 3]</sup>

According to Fred Clothey, the evidence suggests that Kartikeya mythology had become widespread sometime around 200 BCE or after in north India.<sup>[32]</sup> The first clear evidence of Kartikeya's importance emerges in the Hindu Epics such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* where his story is recited. In addition to textual evidence, his importance is affirmed by the archeological, the epigraphical and the numismatic evidence of this period. For example, he is found in numismatic evidence linked to the *Yaudheyas*, a confederation of warriors in north India who are mentioned by ancient Pāṇini.<sup>[33]</sup> They ruled an area consisting of modern era Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh (extending into Garhwal region, Uttarakhand).<sup>[33]</sup> They struck coins bearing the image of Skanda, and these coins are dated to be from before *Kushan Empire* era started.<sup>[33]</sup> During the Kushan dynasty era, that included much of northwest Indian subcontinent, more coins featuring Kartikeya were minted.<sup>[33]</sup> He is also found on ancient Indo-Scythian coins, where his various names are minted in Greek script.<sup>[18][note 4]</sup>



Kartikeya with a Kushan devotee, 2nd century CE.



Coins of the *Yaudheyas* feature Kartikeya, and these are dated to 1st century CE *Haryana*, *Punjab*, *Rajasthan* and *Uttar Pradesh*.<sup>[35]</sup>

Kartikeya was revered in major cultural centers of ancient India. For example, he was a major god for the *Ikshvakus*, an *Andhra* dynasty, as well as for the *Gupta Empire*.<sup>[36]</sup> In south India, eight of the early *Pallava* dynasty rulers (300-550 CE) were named after Skanda or *Kumara*, suggesting the significance of Kartikeya by then.<sup>[37]</sup> Kalidasa's epic poem the *Kumārasambhava* features Kartikeya.

## In Tamil literature

The *Tolkāppiyam*, one of the most ancient texts of the Tamil literature, mentions *cēyōṅ* "the red one", who is identified with *Murugaṅ*, whose name is literally *Murukaṅ* "the youth"; the other gods referred to in the *Tolkāppiyam* are *Māyōṅ* "the dark one" (identified with *Vishnu*), *Vēntaṅ* "the sovereign" (identified with *Indra*) and *Korravai* "the victorious" (identified with *Kali*) and *Varunan* "the sea god".<sup>[38]</sup> Extant *Sangam*

literature works, dated between the third century BCE and the fifth century CE glorified Murugan, "the red god seated on the blue peacock, who is ever young and resplendent," as "the favoured god of the Tamils."<sup>[39]</sup> Korravai is often identified as the mother of Murugan.<sup>[40]</sup>

In the *Tirumurukāṟtruuppaṭai*, he is called *Muruku* and described as a god of beauty and youth, with phrases such as "his body glows like the sun rising from the emerald sea". It describes him with six faces each with a function, twelve arms, his victory over evil, and the temples dedicated to him in the hilly regions.<sup>[41]</sup>

## Puranas

Kartikeya is mentioned in Shaiva Puranas. Of these, the *Skanda Purana* is the largest *Mahāpurāṇa*, a genre of eighteen Hindu religious texts.<sup>[42]</sup> The text contains over 81,000 verses, and is part of Shaivite literature,<sup>[43]</sup> titled after Skanda, a son of Shiva and Parvati, who is also known as Kartikeya and Murugan.<sup>[44]</sup> While the text is named after Skanda, he does not feature either more or less prominently in this text than in other Shiva-related Puranas.<sup>[44]</sup> The text has been an important historical record and influence on the Hindu traditions related to war-god Skanda.<sup>[44][45]</sup> The earliest text titled *Skanda Purana* likely existed by the 6th-century CE,<sup>[46][47]</sup> but the *Skanda Purana* that has survived into the modern era exists in many versions.<sup>[48]</sup>

## Buddhism

### Early texts

The earliest mention of this deity in Buddhist texts may be found in the *Janavasabha Sutta* of the *Pali Canon*, where he is referred to as **Sanankumāra**. Here he is introduced as a deva of the rank of Mahābrahmā and a disciple of the Buddha.

The Chinese translation of the *Dīrgha Āgama* features the same deity with the title Brahmā[śanan]kumāra (梵童子). He is described as a manifestation of Mahābrahmārāja. He has five hair coils (頭五角髻), a handsome face (顏貌端正) and emanates purple-golden light (紫金色) that surpasses the light of the other devas.

### Theravada

According to Richard Gombrich, Skanda has been an important deity in Theravada Buddhism pantheon, in countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand. The *Nikaya Samgraha* describes Skanda Kumara as a guardian deity of the land, along with Upulvan (Vishnu), Saman and Vibhisana.<sup>[50]</sup> Similarly, the 16th-century Siamese text *Jinakalamali* mentions him as a guardian god. There are Buddhist Sinhala shrines such as at Kataragama dedicated to Skanda which have historically been officiated by Hindu priests, which attracted Buddhist devotees and enjoyed royal support.<sup>[50]</sup> Since the 1950s, states Brian Morris, the Kataragama shrine of Skanda has attracted over half a million devotional pilgrims every year, most being Buddhists.<sup>[51][52]</sup>

### Mahayana

The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* mentions Kumāra as one of the eighty gods (八十神) worshiped by the common people.



Skanda Bodhisattva is the Dharma protector in Mahayana Buddhism.<sup>[49]</sup> Above: Skanda's statue in Anhui province, China.



The *Ārya Kaṇikrodhavajrakumārabodhisattava Sādhanaṅvidhi Sūtra* (聖迦拏忿怒金剛童子菩薩成就儀軌經) (T 1796) features a section for the recitation of a mantra dedicated to the deity, where he is also paired with *Ísvara*. *Yi Xing's Commentary of the Mahāvairocana Tantra* (大毘盧遮那成佛經疏) clarifies that Kumāra is the son of *Ísvara*.<sup>[53]</sup>

## Sri Lanka

In Sri Lanka, the god *Kataragama deviyo* is a popular object of devotion among both Tamil Hindus and Sinhalese Buddhists. While many regard him as a *bodhisattva*, he is also associated with sensuality and retribution. Anthropologist *Gananath Obeyesekere* has suggested that the deity's popularity among Buddhists is due to his power to grant emotional gratification, which is in stark contrast to sensual restraint that characterizes Buddhist practice in Sri Lanka.<sup>[54]</sup>



Statue of Wéi Tuó (Skanda) in Chung Tai Chan Monastery in Puli Township, Nantou County, Taiwan

## China

In Chinese Buddhism, *Skanda* (also sometimes known as *Kumāra* (鳩摩羅天)) is known as *Weituo* (韋陀 or 韋馱), a young heavenly general, the guardian deity of local monasteries and the protector of Buddhist *dharma*.<sup>[55][56]</sup> According to *Henrik Sørensen*, this representation became common after the Tang period, and became well established in the late Song period.<sup>[57]</sup> He is also regarded as one of the of the twenty-four celestial guardian deities, who are a grouping of originally Hindu and Taoist deities adopted into Chinese Buddhism as *dharmapalas*.<sup>[58]</sup> *Skanda* was also adopted by Korean Buddhism, and he appears in its woodblock prints and paintings.<sup>[57]</sup>

## Jainism

According to *Asko Parpola*, the Jain deity *Naigamesa*, who is also referred to as *Hari-Naigamesin*, is depicted in early Jain texts as riding the peacock and as the leader of the divine army, both symbols of *Kartikeya*.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Iconography

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Ancient coins of the *Yaudheyas*, dated to 1st and 2nd century CE, show *Kartikeya* as a warrior with either one or six heads. *Kushan* coins show him with one head. In general, single head is far more common regardless of which dynasty minted them.<sup>[59]</sup> The earliest statues discovered in *Punjab* and *Kashmir* show him with either one or six heads. The oldest sculptures such as those found in *Mathura* show him with one head, while six head iconography is dated to post-Gupta Empire era.<sup>[60]</sup> All *Kushan Empire* era artwork show him with one head, even though there are *Kushan* deities such as a goddess who is shown with multiple heads.<sup>[22]</sup>

The *Kushan Empire* era statues of *Kartikeya*, dated to 1st and 2nd-century CE, have been found at various sites in the Indian subcontinent, particularly at *Mathura* and *Gandhara*. They show him as a warrior dressed in *dhoti* (sheet wrapped at waist, covering the legs), armour like a warrior, spear in his right hand and a bird (rooster) in his left.<sup>[61][62]</sup> There is some difference between his ancient iconography in *Mathura* and *Gandhara* artwork. The *Gandhara* arts show him in more a *Scythian* dress, likely reflecting the local dress culture prevalent in those times. Further, it is in the oldest *Gandharan* statues where he is shown with a bird that looks like a chicken or cock.<sup>[63]</sup> According to *Richard Mann*, the bird may symbolize *Kartikeya's* agility and



Kartikeya (Kâtkâ Dyao) is worshipped with a bow and an arrow by the Hajongs of Northeastern India.

maneuverability as a warrior god, and may be a Parthian influence.<sup>[63]</sup> His iconography symbolizes his attributes as a hunter, warrior and philosopher.<sup>[64]</sup>

Kartikeya iconography shows him as a youthful god, dressed as a warrior, carrying the weapon called Vel. It is a divine spear, often called sakti, signifying the Kundalini shakti.<sup>[65]</sup> He is sometimes depicted with many weapons including: a sword, a javelin, a mace, a discus and a bow although more usually he is depicted wielding the sakti or spear. His vahana (vehicle, mount) is a peacock. He has

either one head or six, depending on the region or artist.<sup>[66][67]</sup>



The six-headed Kartikeya riding a peacock with his consorts Valli and Devasena, The peacock is seen trampling a snake by Raja Ravi Varma.

## Legends

The Epic era literature of ancient India recite numerous legends of Kartikeya, often with his other names such as Skanda. For example, the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata dedicates chapters 223 to 232 to the legends of Skanda, but depicts him as the son of Agni and Svaha.<sup>[28]</sup> Similarly, Valmiki's Ramayana dedicates chapters 36 and 37 to Skanda, but describes him as the child of deities Rudra (Shiva) and Parvati, whose birth is aided by Agni and Ganga.<sup>[69][70]</sup>

The legends of Kartikeya vary significantly, sometimes within the same text. For example, while the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata describes Skanda as the son of Agni, the Shalya Parva and the Anushasana Parva of the same text presents Skanda's legend as the son of Maheshvara (Shiva) and Parvati.<sup>[28]</sup>

In Vana Parva, the circumstances behind Kartikeya's birth legend do not involve Shiva and Parvati.<sup>[71]</sup> Rather it is deity Agni who goes to a hermitage of seven married Rishis (sages) and meets their seven wives. He is sexually attracted to all seven, but none reciprocate. Svaha is present there and she is attracted to Agni, but Agni is not. According to the legend, Svaha takes the form of six of the wives, one by one, and sleeps with Agni.<sup>[71]</sup> She does not take the form of Arundhati, Vasistha's wife, because of Arundhati's extraordinary virtuous powers. Svaha deposits the semen of Agni into the reeds of River Ganges, where it develops and then is born as six headed Skanda.<sup>[71]</sup>

A totally different legend in the later books of the Mahabharata make Shiva and Parvati as the parents. They were making love, but they are disturbed, and Shiva inadvertently spills his semen on the ground.<sup>[8]</sup> Shiva's semen incubates in River Ganges, preserved by the heat of god Agni, and this fetus is born as baby Kartikeya



Skanda statue are found in Southeast Asia. Above: 6th–8th century Skanda from Prey Veng Province, Cambodia.<sup>[68]</sup>

on the banks of Ganges.<sup>[8][20]</sup>



Granite Kartikeya seated on a peacock from 12th-century Andhra Pradesh.

Some legends state that he was the elder son of Shiva, others make him the younger brother of Ganesha. This is implied by another legend connected to his birth. Devas have been beaten up by Asuras led by Taraka, because Taraka had a boon from ascetic celibate yogi Shiva that only Shiva's son can kill him. Devas learn about this boon, and plan how to get Shiva into a relationship. So they bring Parvati into the picture, have her seduce yogi Shiva, and wed Parvati so that Skanda can be born to kill Taraka.<sup>[72]</sup>

According to Raman Varadara, Murugan or Kartikeya was originally a Tamil deity, who was adopted by north Indians.<sup>[5]</sup> He was the god of war in the Dravidian legends, and became so elsewhere in the Indian subcontinent too.<sup>[5]</sup> In contrast, G. S. Ghurye states that according to the archeological and epigraphical evidence, the contemporary Murugan, Subrahmanya and Kartikeya is a composite of two influences, one from south and one from north in the form of Skanda and Mahasena.<sup>[73]</sup> He as the warrior-philosopher god was the patron deity for many ancient northern and western Hindu kingdoms, and of the Gupta Empire, according to Ghurye. After the 7th-century, Skanda's importance diminished while his brother Ganesha's importance rose in the west and north, while in the south

the legends of Murugan continued to grow.<sup>[73][74]</sup> According to Norman Cutler, Kartikeya-Murugan-Skanda of South and North India coalesced over time, but some aspects of the South Indian iconography and mythology for Murugan have remained unique to Tamil Nadu.<sup>[75]</sup>

Kartikeya's legends vary by region. For example, in the northern and western Indian traditions Kartikeya or Skanda is the perpetual celibate bachelor, though Sanskrit texts mention Devasena as his wife. However in the Tamil legends he has two consorts, Devayanai (identified with Devasena) and Valli.<sup>[4][5]</sup> Many of the major events in Murugan's life take place during his youth, and legends surrounding his birth are popular in Tamil Nadu. This has encouraged the worship of Murugan as a child-God, very similar to the worship of the child Krishna in north India. Kartikeya's youth, beauty and bravery was much celebrated in Sanskrit works like the Kathasaritsagara. Kalidasa made the birth of Kumara the subject of a lyrical epic, the Kumārasambhava.<sup>[69][76]</sup>

## Theology

There is extensive Hindu symbolism and theology associated with Kartikeya. Regardless of the variance among the legends, his birth is in difficult circumstances, he is born through a surrogate after being left near a river. He is raised not by his natural mother but a host of mothers, but later he is a part of his biological family. Kartikeya symbolizes a union of polarities.<sup>[78]</sup> He is handsome warrior and described as a celibate yogi. He uses his creative martial abilities to lead an army against Taraka and other demons, and described as a philosopher-warrior.<sup>[8][9]</sup> He is a uniter, championing the attributes of both Shaivism and Vaishnavism.<sup>[79]</sup>

His theology is most developed in the Tamil texts,<sup>[14]</sup> and in the Shaiva Siddhanta tradition.<sup>[8][9]</sup> He is described as *dheivam* (abstract neuter divinity, *nirguna Brahman*), as *kadavul* (divinity in nature, in everything), as *Devan* (masculine deity), and as *iraivatavam* (concrete manifestation of the sacred, *saguna Brahman*).<sup>[80]</sup>

### Guha (Kartikeya)

You who has form and who is formless,  
you who are both being and non-being,  
who are the fragrance and the blossom,  
who are the jewel and its lustre,  
who are the seed of life and life itself,  
who are the means and the existence itself,  
who are the supreme guru,



According to Fred Clothey, as Murugan (also referred to as Murugan, Cheyyon), he embodies the "cultural and religious whole that comprises South Indian Shaivism".<sup>[78]</sup> He is the philosopher and exponent of Shaiva Siddhanta theology, as well as the patron deity of the Tamil language.<sup>[64][81][82]</sup>

## Worship

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### Within India

#### Southern India

Kartikeya is a major deity among the Hindus of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

#### Tamil Nadu

He is considered the God of Tamil language and he is mentioned a lot in Sangam literature.<sup>[39]</sup> The six abodes of Murugan are all in Tamil Nadu. Each of these temples has a unique history and different reason to worship Lord Murugan. Thirupparamkunram Murugan Temple he is worshiped as he (Lord Kartikeya) worshiped Lord Shiva. As per tradition, devotees who go to the six abodes of Murugan tonsure their head in imitation of Palani deity.

- Thai Pooam during January – February month is celebrated as a 6-day festival. On Thai Pooam day, Kavadis and Palkudams are taken by devotees in procession around Chhedanagar. Special Abhishekams are performed to the Moolavar and Utsavar. Annadhanam is provided to all devotees participating in the functions. In the night, Lord Muruga is taken in procession accompanied by Nadaswaram, Veda Parayanam around Chhedanagar.<sup>[83]</sup>
- Vaikasi Visakam day, (during May –June month), Kavadis and Palkudams are taken by devotees in procession around Chhedanagar.<sup>[83]</sup>
- Skanda Sashti during October–November month is celebrated as a 6-day festival. Spiritual discourses by learned scholars and/or music concerts by popular artists from South or from Mumbai are organized.<sup>[83]</sup>

#### West Bengal

In West Bengal, Kartikeya is associated with the birth of children. He is worshipped on the last day of the Month of Kartik (October-November). It has become a trend in Bengal that the clay model of the deity is kept at night before the day of worship (usually by friends) for the newly married couple before the door of their house. The deity is worshiped the next day in the evening and is offered toys.<sup>[84]</sup>

The deity is also worshipped during the Durga Puja festival in Bengal. Goddess Durga is accompanied by her four children Lakshmi, Saraswati, Ganesha, and Kartikeya. Kartikeya is the youngest of them visualized as a young man, riding a peacock and wielding a bow and arrows. He is stated to be Kumara, that is, a bachelor as he is unmarried. While Ganesha is paired with the rich Lakshmi, Kartikeya is paired with the learned Saraswati.<sup>[85]</sup>

come  
and bestow your grace, O  
Guha [Murugan]

—*Kantaranuputi 51*,  
*Arunagirinathar*  
(Translator: Kamil  
Zvelebil)<sup>[77]</sup>



Murugan with Devasena (on right of image) and Valli (on left of image).

## Beyond India

### Nepal

Kartikeya is worshipped as Kumar in Nepal both by Hindu and Buddhist Communities. The Newah community celebrates Sithi Nakha: Festival dedicated to Sithi Kumar. Sithi Nakha (Kumar Shashthi) is celebrated on this sixth day of the waxing moon, according to the lunar calendar, in the Lunar month of Jestha. The festival is celebrated by cleaning water sources like wells, ponds and stone spouts and ending it with a grand Newah feast of six different varieties of Newarhi food including Wo or Waa (fried lintel bread) and Chatamari (Newah pizza). The Festival is traditional Environment day as houses, courtyards, streets and allies are cleaned during this day. It is believed that cleaning such water sources will bring in rain for good cultivation of crops. It is also celebrated to welcome monsoon as this was the ideal time to set up rice seedbeds. The most of Newah communities also mark the festival as the end of Dewaali, to worship their family deities.

### Malaysia

Kartikeya is revered by the Hindus in Malaysia and other South-East Asian countries such as Singapore and Indonesia. Thaipusam is one of the important festivals celebrated. Sri Subramanyar Temple at Batu Caves temple complex in Malaysia is dedicated to Kartikeya. There are some other temples in Malaysia such as:

- Kallumalai Temple in Ipoh<sup>[86][87][88]</sup>
- Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Temple, Penang
- Sannayasi Andavar Temple in Cheng, Malacca<sup>[86][89]</sup>

### Sri Lanka

Karthhikeya is worshipped by the Sinhalese as Kataragama deviyo also by Sri Lankan Tamils as Muruhan, a guardian deity of Sri Lanka. Numerous temples exist throughout the island. He is a favourite deity of the common folk everywhere and it is said he never hesitates to come to the aid of a devotee when called upon. In the deeply Sinhalese south of Sri Lanka, he is worshipped at the Kataragama temple, where he is known as Kathiravel or Kataragama deviyo. Local legend holds that Murugan alighted in Kataragama and was smitten by Valli, one of the local girls. After a courtship, they were married. This event is taken to signify that Murugan is accessible to all who worship and love him, regardless of their birth or heritage. The Nallur Kandaswamy temple, the Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple and the Sella Channithy Temple near Valvettiturai are the three foremost Murugan temples in Jaffna. The Chitravelayutha temple in Verukal on the border between Trincomalee and Batticaloa is also noteworthy as is the Mandur Kandaswamy temple in Batticaloa. The late medieval-era temple of the tooth in Kandy, dedicated to the tooth relic of the Buddha, has a Kataragama deiyo shrine adjacent to it dedicated to the veneration of Skanda in the Sinhalese tradition. Almost all Buddhist temples house a shrine room for Kataragama deviyo reflecting the significance of Murugan in Sinhala Buddhism.



Worship of the Kartik deity of West Bengal, with toys (right side of image)



The deity Kartikeya is shown in the left side of the image, below the goddess Saraswati, accompanied by his sibling Ganesh, Lakshmi and goddess Durga (seen killing Mahishasura) during the autumn festival.

By the 16th century, the Kataragama temple had become synonymous with Skanda-Kumara who was a guardian deity of Sinhala Buddhism.<sup>[90]</sup> The town was popular as a place of pilgrimage for Hindus from India and Sri Lanka by the 15th century. The popularity of the deity at the Kataragama temple was also recorded by the Pali chronicles of Thailand such as Jinkalmali in the 16th century. There are number of legends both Buddhist and Hindu that attribute supernatural events to the very locality.<sup>[90]</sup> Scholars such as Paul Younger and Heinz Bechert speculate that rituals practiced by the native priests of Kataragama temple betray Vedda ideals of propitiation. Hence they believe the area was of Vedda veneration that was taken over by the Buddhist and Hindus in the medieval period.<sup>[91]</sup>



The Sri Lankan Nallur Kandaswamy temple (Jaffna) is dedicated to Murugan (Kartikeya).

## Temples

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This is not an exhaustive list.

### Within India

#### South India

##### Tamil Nadu

- Palani Murugan Temple
- Swamimalai Murugan Temple
- Thiruchendur Murugan Temple
- Thirupparamkunram Murugan Temple
- Thiruthani Murugan Temple
- Pazhamudircholai Murugan Temple

The above six temples are dedicated to Kartikeya as their primary deity.<sup>[92]</sup> These six temples in Tamil Nadu, together are referred to as Aru Padaiveedu (Tamil: ஆறுபடை வீடு), that are mentioned in Thirumurugatrupadai, written by Nakkeerar and in Thirupugal, written by Arunagirinathar.<sup>[93][94]</sup>

##### Kerala

There are many temples dedicated to Subramanya in Kerala such as:

- Atiyambur Sri Subramanya Temple in Kanhangad Kasaragod<sup>[95]</sup>
- Subramanya Swamy temple in Payyanur<sup>[96]</sup>
- Panmana Subramanya Swamy temple in Panmana<sup>[97]</sup>
- Haripad Sree Subrahmanya Swamy temple
- Kilimarathukavu Subrahmanya Temple (<http://www.kilimara-thukavu.com/>)



Hindus in Réunion



Kartikeya-Subrahmaniya temples are popular in hilly regions such as the Western Ghats. Above: the 12th-century Marudhamalai Temple in Coimbatore.



Marudhamalai temple Reflections

## Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

Anantapur District Pampanuru Subramanyam Swamy temple Kothur,  
Kurnool District

- Skandagiri, Secunderabad<sup>[98][99]</sup>
- Biccavolu<sup>[100]</sup>
- Mopidevi<sup>[101]</sup>
- Mallam<sup>[102][103]</sup>



Murugan Temple of North America

## Karnataka

- Kukke Subramanya Temple Kartikeya is worshipped as Subrahmanya where he is regarded as Lord of the serpents.<sup>[104][105]</sup>
- Ghati Subramanya

## North India

### New Delhi

- Malai Mandir, a prominent temple complex<sup>[106]</sup>

### Haryana

- Pehowa temple in Haryana<sup>[107]</sup>

### Punjab

- Achaleshwar Temple in Gurdaspur.<sup>[108]</sup>

### Chandigarh

- Sri Karthikeya Swami Temple<sup>[109]</sup>

### Himachal Pradesh

- Kartik Swami Temple in Manali <sup>[110]</sup>
- Kartik Swami Temple in Chamba <sup>[111]</sup>

### Uttarakhand

- Karthik Swami temple above Rudraprayag<sup>[112]</sup>

### Madhya Pradesh



- Kartikeya Mandir, Gwalior. It opens for a single day once in a year.<sup>[113]</sup>

## Gujarat

- Sri Balamurugan Devasthanam in Ahmedabad<sup>[114]</sup>

## Maharashtra

- Kartik Swami Thirumal Murugan Temple<sup>[115]</sup>
- Thiruchembur Murugan Temple, Chembur, Mumbai<sup>[83]</sup>

## West Bengal

- Sri Ganesh & Murugan Temples in Kolkata<sup>[116]</sup>

## Outside India

### Sri Lanka

- Kataragama (Kadirgamam) in the south<sup>[117]</sup>
- Temple in Tirukovil in the east
- Shrine in Embekke in Kandy
- Nallur Kandaswamy temple in Jaffna.

### Malaysia

- Batu Caves near Kuala Lumpur which has a 42.7-m-high statue of Murugan at the entrance, the largest Lord Murugan statue in the world.<sup>[118][119]</sup>
- Arulmigu Balathandayuthapani Temple, Penang
- Nattukkottai Chettiar Temple, Penang
- Sri Marathandavar Bala Dhandayuthapani Alayam, Maran, Pahang
- Sri Kandaswamy Kovil, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur
- Sannasimalai Temple in Malacca.
- Kallumalai Temple in Ipoh
- Sri Thandayuthapani Temple Sentul, Kuala Lumpur

### Indonesia

- Langkat, Indonesia which has 16 meter high and standing outside of its temple named as Shri Raja Rajeshwari Amman Kovil Temple. It has second largest Murugan statue in the world.

### Singapore



Thaipusam festivities near the Batu Caves, Malaysia

- Sri Thendayuthapani Temple in Singapore is a major Hindu temple.<sup>[120]</sup>
- Arulmigu Velmurugan Gnana Muneeswaran Temple, 50 Rivervale Cres Sengkang, Singapore
- Sri Holy Tree Balasubramaniam Temple
- Sri Murugan Hill Temple, 931 Upper Bukit Timah Rd,

## United States

- Shiva Murugan Temple in Concord, Northern California<sup>[121]</sup>
- Murugan Temple of North America in Maryland, Washington DC.
- Carolina Murugan Temple (planned) in Chatham County, North Carolina. To include “the tallest statue of Lord Murugan in the world.”<sup>[122]</sup>

## Canada

- Kanthasamy Temple in Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- Murugan temple in Val-Morin, a suburb of the city of Montreal.<sup>[123]</sup>

## United Kingdom

- Highgate Hill Murugan temple in London<sup>[124]</sup>
- Sri Murugan Temple in Manor park, London<sup>[125]</sup>
- Shri Siva Murugan Temple in Leicester is a popular temple.<sup>[126][127]</sup>
- Skanda Vale in Carmarthenshire, Wales is an ashram and place of pilgrimage<sup>[128]</sup>

## Australia

- Murugan temple in Parramatta (Mays Hill)<sup>[129]</sup>
- Perth Bala Murugan temple in Mandogalup<sup>[130]</sup>
- Kundrathu Kumaran temple in Rockbank, Melbourne<sup>[131]</sup>

## New Zealand

- Thirumurugan Temple in Auckland<sup>[132]</sup>
- Kurinji Kumaran Temple in Wellington<sup>[133]</sup>

## Switzerland

- Sri Sivasubramaniam Temple, located in the Sihl Valley in Adliswil is the largest Hindu temple in Switzerland.<sup>[134]</sup>

## South Africa

- Clairwood Shree Siva Soobramoniam Temple

## Fiji

- [Sri Siva Subramaniya temple](#)

## Notes

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1. Kartikeya's marital status varies from region to region. In Northern India, he is generally considered celibate. The Sanskrit scriptures only mention Devasena as his wife, while in South Indian traditions, he has two wives — Devayanai (identified with Devasena) and Valli.<sup>[4][5]</sup>
2. **कुमारं** माता युवतिः समृद्धं गुहा बिभर्ति न ददाति पित्रे । अनीकमस्य न मिनज्जनासः पुरः पश्यन्ति निहितमरतौ ॥१॥ कमेतं त्वं युवते कुमारं पेषी बिभर्षि महिषी जजान । पूर्वीर्हि गर्भः शरदो ववर्धापश्यं जातं यदसूत माता ॥२॥ हिरण्यदन्तं शुचिवर्णमारत्क्षेत्रादपश्यमायुधा मिमानम् । ददानो अस्मा अमृतं विपृक्वत्किं मामनिन्द्राः कृणवन्ननुक्थाः ॥३॥ क्षेत्रादपश्यं सनुतश्चरन्तं सुमद्यूथं न पुरु शोभमानम् । न ता अगृभ्रन्नजनिष्ट हि षः पलिकनीरिद्युवतयो भवन्ति ॥४॥ (...) [Hymn 5.2, Wikisource \(https://sa.wikisource.org/wiki/ऋग्वेदः\\_सूक्तं\\_५.२\)](#);  
English: "The youthful Mother keeps the Boy in secret pressed to her close, nor yields him to the Father. But, when he lies upon the arm, the people see his unfading countenance before them. [5.2.1] What child is this thou carriest as handmaid, O Youthful One? The Consort-Queen hath borne him. The Babe unborn increased through many autumns. I saw him born what time his Mother bare him. [5.2.2] I saw him from afar gold-toothed, bright-coloured, hurling his weapons from his habitation, What time I gave him Amrta free from mixture. How can the Indraless, the hymnless harm me? [5.2.3] I saw him moving from the place he dwells in, even as with a herd, brilliantly shining. These seized him not: he had been born already. They who were grey with age again grow youthful. [5.2.4]  
– Translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith, [Wikisource \(https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Rig\\_Veda/Mandala\\_5/Hymn\\_2\)](#)
3. Verse 7.26.2 states Kumara is Skanda, but there are stylistic differences between this verse and the rest of the chapter. This may be because this verse was interpolated into the text at a later date.<sup>[31]</sup>
4. Richard Mann states that Skanda-Kumara may be composite deity linked to Greek deities pair called [Dioscuri](#) (Castor and Pollux), given the numismatic overlap in their iconography and similar warrior-god mythologies.<sup>[34]</sup>

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