

Rishis

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# Chapter 1

## Four Kumaras

For Sanat Kumara from Theosophy, see Sanat Kumara.

The **Kumaras** are four sages (*rishis*) who roam the universe as children from the Puranic texts of Hinduism,<sup>[1][2]</sup> generally named Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana and Sanatkumara. They are described as the first mind-born creations and sons of the creator-god Brahma. Born from Brahma's mind, the four Kumaras undertook lifelong vows of celibacy (*brahmacharya*) against the wishes of their father. They are said to wander throughout the materialistic and spiritualistic universe without any desire but with purpose to teach.<sup>[1]</sup> All four brothers studied Vedas from their childhood, and always travelled together.<sup>[3]</sup>

The *Bhagavata Purana* lists the Kumaras among the twelve *Mahajanas* (great devotees or *bhaktas*)<sup>[4]</sup> who although being eternally liberated souls from birth, still became attracted to the devotional service of Vishnu from their already enlightened state. It also mentions them as being an avatar of Vishnu.<sup>[5]</sup> They play a significant role in a number of Hindu spiritual traditions, especially those associated with the worship of Vishnu and his avatar Krishna, sometimes even in traditions related to the god Shiva.

### 1.1 Names

The group is known by various names: “Kumaras” (the boys/male children/young boys), “Chaturšana” or “Chatuh sana” (the four with names starting with Sana) and “Sanakadi” (Sanaka and the others).<sup>[6]</sup> Individual names usually include Sanaka (ancient), Sanatana (eternal), Sanandana (joyful) and Sanatkumara (Ever Young).<sup>[1][2]</sup> Sometimes, Sanatana is replaced by Sanatsujata. A fifth Kumara named Ribhu is sometimes added. Sometimes, the Kumaras are enumerated as six with Sana and Ribhu or Sanatsujata added.<sup>[7]</sup>

### 1.2 Birth and mission

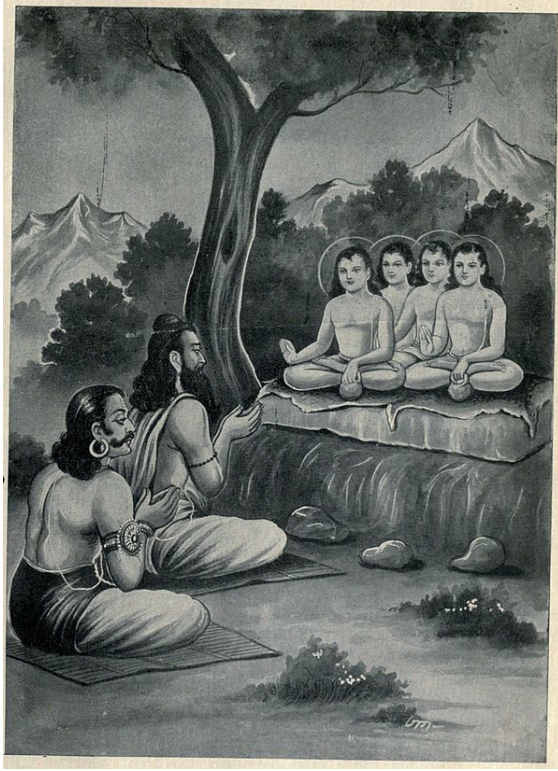
The four Kumaras are the eldest sons of the creator-god Brahma.<sup>[8]</sup> When Brahma undertook the task of cre-

ation of the universe, he first created some beings from different parts of his body to aid him. The Kumaras was the first such beings. They were created from his mind and appeared as infants. Brahma ordered them to aid in creation, but as manifestations of *Sattva* (purity), and uninterested in worldly life, they refused and instead devoted themselves to God and celibacy, against the wishes of their father.<sup>[6][8]</sup> The *Bhagavata Purana* narrates further that their refusal made Brahma angry and his wrath manifested into the god Rudra, also known as Lord Shiva.<sup>[1]</sup> As per a variant, Brahma practised austerities (*tapas*) and pleased the Supreme God Vishnu, so he appeared in the form of the four infant Kumaras as Brahma's sons.<sup>[8]</sup> Some texts like the *Devi Bhagavata Purana* and the *Bhavishya Purana* narrates the four Kumaras appeared even before the Brahma of the present age. (In a cycle of time, some texts say that a Brahma dies and is reborn.)<sup>[6]</sup>

The four Kumaras learnt the Vedas at the age of four or five.<sup>[8]</sup> They thus became great *jnanis* (learned beings), *yogis* and *Siddhas* (the perfect enlightened ones). The Kumaras remained in form of children due to their spiritual virtues. The age of the sages varies in various sacred texts. While five is the most popular, they are also mentioned as being fifteen- or sixteen-year-old youths.<sup>[9]</sup> They practised the vow of renunciation (*Sannyasa*) and celibacy (*brahmacharya*) and remained naked. They wander together throughout the materialistic and spiritualistic universe without any desire but with purpose to teach.<sup>[1][6][8]</sup> They are sometimes included in the list of Siddhars (Tamil equivalent for Siddha).<sup>[10]</sup>

The four Kumaras are said to reside in *Jana Loka* or *Janar loka* (*loka* or world of the intellectuals in the present parlance) or in Vishnu's abode *Vaikuntha*.<sup>[8][11]</sup> They constantly recite the mantra *Hari sharanam* (Vishnu – “God the Redeemer our Refuge”) or sing Vishnu's praises. These hymns and glories of Vishnu serve as their only food.<sup>[8]</sup> Another son of Brahma, the sage Narada, who is described as their disciple, extolls their virtues in the *Padma Purana*. Narada says though they appear as five-year-old children, they are the great ancestors of the world.<sup>[8]</sup>

### 1.3 Discourses



Four Kumaras preaching in the Mahabharata

The discourses of the four Kumaras are found in the Hindu epic *Mahabharata* as well as the *Bhagavata Purana*.<sup>[8]</sup>

The *Shanti Parva* book of the *Mahabharata* describes the discourse given by the four Kumaras to the demon king Vritra and his guru – the sage *Shukra*. The king and his guru worship the Kumaras and then Shukra asks them to describe the greatness of Vishnu. Sanat-kumara starts with describing Vishnu as the creator and destroyer of all beings. He equates Vishnu's body parts with parts of the universe and the elements, for example the earth is Vishnu's feet and water is his tongue. All gods are described as being Vishnu. Then Sanatkumara categorises all beings into six colours depending upon the proportion of the three *gunas*: *Sattva* (pure), *Rajas* (dim) and *Tamas* (dark). From the lowest to the foremost beings, the colours are dark (Tamas is high, Rajas is mid, Sattva is low), tawny (Tamas is high, Sattva is mid, Rajas is low), blue (Rajas is high, Tamas is mid, Sattva is low), red (Rajas is high, Sattva is mid, Tamas is low), yellow (Sattva is high, Tamas is mid, Rajas is low) and white (Sattva is high, Rajas is mid, Tamas is low). (The *Vishnu Purana* gives non-living things, lower animals and birds, humans, *Prajapatis*, gods and the Kumaras are respective examples of the above colours.) Sanat-kumara elaborates further how a *Jiva* (living entity) journeys from dark to white in his various births, ultimately gaining moksha if he does good deeds, devotion and yoga.<sup>[12][13]</sup>

The *Bhagavata Purana* narrates the visit of the four Kumaras to the court of King *Prithu*, the first sovereign in Hindu mythology and an avatar of Vishnu. The king worships the sages and asked them about the way of emancipation (*moksha*) that can be followed by all people who caught in the web of worldly things. Sanat-kumara tells the king that Vishnu is the refuge to all and grants liberation of the cycle of births and rebirths. His worship frees one from material desires and lust. One should be freed from material objects, lives a simple life of non-violence and devotion of Vishnu and follows the teachings of a good *guru* and undergo *Self-realization*. One should realize that all living things are forms of God. Without devotion and knowledge, humans are incomplete. Out of four *purusharthas* ("goals of life"), only moksha is eternal, while religious duty, wealth and pleasure decay with this life. While all beings are subject to destruction, the soul and God in our bodies is eternal. So it is paramount that you surrender to God (as Vishnu or *Krishna*), said Sanat-kumara ending his council. Prithu worships the Kumaras again, who blessed him.<sup>[14]</sup>

The first section or *Purvabhaga* of *Naradiya Purana*, an *upapurana* has 4 *padas* or sections, each told by the four Kumaras respectively to Narada.<sup>[15]</sup> Brahma, who had received the knowledge of the *Puranas* from Vishnu, imbibed this to his Four Kumaras, who then taught the *Puranas* to Narada. Narada transmitted it to *Vyasa*, who scripted them into the Puranic texts. The *Vishnu Purana* is recorded in two parts, the Vishnu Purana and Naradiya Purana. The teachings of Sanaka of the Kumara brothers are contained in the Naradiya Purana which is also divided in two parts, the first part containing the teachings of Sanaka and others.<sup>[16]</sup>

### 1.4 Visit to Vaikuntha

The four Kumaras roamed around at their free will with their cosmic powers all over the universe. During one of their sojourns, they arrived at *Vaikuntha*, the abode of Vishnu. The city, with the residence of Vishnu located at the center of seven circular walls, is considered as a place of bliss and purity. It has seven gates of entry. The four Kumaras passed through the first six gates without any hindrance. The seventh gate was guarded by *Jaya* and *Vijaya*, the two *dvarapalas* (door-guardians) of Vishnu's palace. The angry guardians stopped the four Kumaras and laughed at them since they looked like children and were also naked, and did not permit them to enter through the seventh gate. The four Kumaras were perplexed by the behaviour of the gatekeepers as they had not faced such a situation and ridicule anywhere else. They expected *Jaya* and *Vijaya* to be like their master Vishnu, who does not differentiate among beings. Enraged, the Kumaras cursed them to be born on earth thrice, as three villains with characteristics of "lust, anger and greed". The gatekeepers accept the curse and bow to the Kumaras





*Jaya, the dvarapala, in image from Chennakesava Temple.*

and beg for their forgiveness. Lord Vishnu who learnt of the incident, appeared before the Kumaras in all his glory with his retinue. The four Kumaras, who were on their first visit to Vaikuntha, took in by the sight and the glittering divine figure of Vishnu. With deep devotion, they appealed to him to accept them as his devotees and allow them to offer worship at his feet for all time to come and let his feet be their final emancipation. Vishnu complied with their request and also assured Jaya and Vijaya that they will be born as demons on earth but will be released from all births (killed) by an avatar of Vishnu. The two guards were dismissed by Vishnu to go and suffer the curse of the Kumaras on earth and then only return to his abode, after the end of the curse. The two banished guards were then born on earth, at an inauspicious hour, to the sage Kashyapa and his wife Diti as asuras who were named Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha.<sup>[2][17]</sup>

## 1.5 In Shiva traditions

Shiva had assumed the form of Dakshinamurti, the great teacher and meditating facing South observing a vow of silence. The four Kumaras approached Shiva for self-realization. He taught them about the Supreme reality – Brahman by making *chin mudra* gesture with his hand. The index finger is touched to the thumb, indicating the union of Brahman and jiva. Thus, Shiva made the Kumaras as his disciples.<sup>[18]</sup>

The *Linga Purana* describes that Shiva or his aspect Vamadeva will be born as a Kumara and then multiply into the four Kumaras in each kalpa (aeon) as sons of Brahma of that kalpa. In the 29th Kalpa, Swetha Lohita is the main Kumara; where they are named as Sananda, Nandana, Vishwananda and Upananadana of white colour; then in the 30th Kalpa, they are named as Virajas, Vivahu, Visoka and Vishwbhavana, all of red colour; and in the 31st Kalpa in yellow colour; and in the 32nd Kalpa, as of black colour.<sup>[17]</sup>

The four sages Sanak, Sanandan, Sanatan, Sanat were learned Brahmins. They were the sons of Lord Brahma. They were very proud of their father, Brahma because he was the creator of the holy books, Vedas. They were aware of three Vedas, - Rigved, Yajurved, and Samveda and considered that the whole knowledge is complete in these three books. On the other hand Sage Atharva approached Lord Shiva to get approval of his knowledge which he gathered from the universe using his divine powers. Lord Shiva, impressed by his creation and blessed Sage Atharva that his book of knowledge would constitute the list of Vedas and will be called as 'Atharvaveda'. When this news reached the sons of Lord Brahma, they protested as according to them the other three Vedas was a complete set of knowledge and there was no need of fourth Veda. They argued with Lord Shiva and challenged his authority to certify a fourth Veda. Finally it was decided that whether to certify a fourth Veda or not depends upon the result learned debate. Goddess Saraswati was appointed as judge. The four Sages fired too much and too complicated questions to Lord Shiva and they were very confident of their victory as they underestimated Lord Shiva. But Shiva, who is the Lord of all the supreme knowledge, answered each and every question. The Sages accept their defeat gracefully and ask for forgiveness. Since then Artharva Ved was added to the list of Vedas, making the total four. The Sages went to their brother Prajapati Daksha who was bitter rival of Lord Shiva. On listening about the defeat of his four brothers, he cursed them to be small children. After that the four sages turned into small children. Since the sages were very learned, they thanked their brother for the curse because after becoming children their urge for learning would be greater.

## 1.6 Other legends

An incident about the meeting of the four Kumaras with Vishnu's avatar Rama is narrated in the *Uttarakanda* of the *Ramcharitmanas*. The Kumaras once stayed in the hermitage of the sage Agastya, who told them about the glory of Rama. So to meet Rama, they went to a forest grove where Rama with his brothers and disciple Hanuman had come. Rama and his brothers were so pleased with meeting the four enlightened sages that they paid obeisance to them. The sages were wonder struck looking at the divinity of Rama that they prostrated before him and out of great ecstasy started shedding tears of happiness. Rama looking at the sages was deeply impressed and asked them to be seated and praised them for their great achievements and their erudite knowledge of the Vedas and Puranas. The four Kumaras were also delighted to hear the words of praise showered on them by Rama. They in turn extolled his great virtues in a hymn.<sup>[19]</sup>

## 1.7 In Nimbarka sampradaya

Vaishnavism (the sect that worships Vishnu as the Supreme) is divided into four *sampradayas* or traditions. Each of them traces its lineage to a heavenly being. The Nimbarka Sampradaya, also known as the Kumara Sampradaya, Catuḥ Sana Sampradaya and Sanakadi Sampradaya, and its philosophy Dvaitadvaita ("duality in unity") is believed to be propagated in humanity by the four Kumaras. The swan avatar of Vishnu Hamsa was the origin of this philosophy and taught it to the four Kumaras, who in turn taught Narada, who finally passed it to the earthy Nimbarka, the main exponent of the sampradaya.<sup>[20]</sup>

## 1.8 See also

- Narada Muni
- Vaishnavism
- Nimbarka Sampradaya

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## 1.11 External links

- [Kumara sampradaya](#)
- [Kumaras](#)



## Chapter 2

# Vishrava

**Vishrava** was the son of **Pulastya** and the grandson of **Brahma**, the Creator, and a powerful Rishi as described in a **scripture epic** of **Ancient India**. A scholar par excellence, he earned great powers through Tapasya, which in turn, earned him great name and fame amongst his fellow Rishis. **Bharadwaja**, in particular, was so impressed with Vishrava that he gave him his daughter, **Ilavida**, in marriage. Ilavida bore Vishrava a son, **Kubera**, the Lord of Wealth and the original ruler of Lanka.<sup>[1]</sup>

The accounts of Vishrava's far-reaching Yogic powers reached the ears of the Asura, **Sumali**, and his wife, **Tataka**. Both sought to increase their own powers through alliances with mighty Kings and Rishis. They decided that their daughter, **Kaikesi** would make a worthy wife for Vishrava and orchestrated her chance encounter with the Rishi. Vishrava fell in love with the beautiful Kaikesi and fathered four children with her. The oldest was **Ravana** who would eventually oust his half-brother, Kubera, as King of Lanka and usurp his throne. **Ravana** was also the villain of the immortal epic, the **Ramayana**.

In addition to Ravana, Vishrava fathered **Vibhishana**, **Kumbakarna** and a daughter, **Soorpanaka**, through Kaikesi. He is said to have disowned his demonic family after witnessing Ravana's disrespectful treatment of his older brother, **Kubera** and returned to his first wife, Ilavida.

According to the **Mahabharata**, however, Vishrava's younger children were born as a result of a falling-out with his eldest: Kubera tried to placate his father by giving him three Rakshasis (two of whom, Raka and Pushpotkata/Pushpotata, seem to be Kaikesi's paternal half-sisters) and in due course Vishrava impregnated all three of them. Pushpotata gave birth to Ravana and later to Kumbhakarna, Malini bore Vibhishana, and Raka had the unpleasant and unsociable twins **Khara** and Shurpanakha.<sup>[2]</sup>

half Pulastya himself. By a Brahmani wife, daughter of the sage Bharadwaja, named Idavida or Ilavida, he had a son, Kuvera, the god of wealth.

- [2] The Mahabharata 3.259.1-12; translated by J. A. B. van Buitenen, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1975, pp. 728-9.

## 2.1 Citations and notes

- [1] Encyclopedia for Epics of Ancient India Quote: VISRAVAS. [Source: Dowson's Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology] Son of Prajapati Pulastya, or, according to a statement of the Mahabharata, a reproduction of

## Chapter 3

# Parashurama

**Parashurama** (Sanskrit: परशुराम IAST: *Paraśurāma*, lit. *Rama with an axe*) is the sixth avatar of Vishnu in Hinduism. He is the son of Renuka and one of the saptarishis, Jamadagni. He lived during the last Treta and Dvapara Yugas and is one of the Chiranjivi (immortals) of Hinduism. He received his famous axe after undertaking terrible penance to please Shiva, who in turn taught him the martial arts.

Parashurama is most known for ridding the world of kshatriyas twenty-one times over after the mighty king Kartavirya Arjuna killed his father. He plays important roles in the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, serving as mentor to Bhishma, Drona and Karna.

Parashurama and Ravana's son Indrajit are believed to be the only humans who ever possessed the three ultimate weapons: the Brahmanda astra, Vaishnava astra and Pashupatastra. Parashurama was a disciple of Shiva and learned the scriptures and the arts of warfare from Shiva. He then acquired celestial weapons from Shiva and the other gods on Shiva's instructions. Shiva personally trained Parashurama for decades in the art of warfare. The Bhargavastra was his personal celestial weapon and vijaya was his personal bow which was gifted by Shiva. Parashurama also fought back the advancing seas to save the lands of Konkan and Kerala.

Parashurama is worshipped as *mūlapuruṣa*, or male ancestral founder, of the Niyogi, Bhumihar, Chitpavan, Devrukhe, Daivadnya, Mohyal, Tyagi, Anavil and Nambudiri Brahmin communities. Along with the sages Vyasa, Kripa and Drona's son Ashwatthama, Parashurama is considered to be foremost among the rishis in the Kaliyuga.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Parashurama will also become one of the saptarishi in the 8th Manvantara.<sup>[3]</sup> Parashurama is a mighty Maharathi and he will reappear as the martial instructor of Vishnu's 10th avatar Kalki.

### 3.1 Etymology

The word *Parashurama* is derived from two words *parashu* (परशु) meaning 'axe' and *rama* (राम). So literally, the word *Parashurama* means 'Rama with an axe'. His other names include:

- Ramabhadra (रामभद्र) - gracious Rama
- Bhargava (भार्गव) - descendant of Bhṛigu
- Bhṛigupati (भृगुपति) - lord of Bhṛigu dynasty
- Bhṛiguvanshi (भृगुवंशी) - he who belongs to Bhṛigu lineage
- Jamadagnya (जामदग्न्य) - son of Jamadagni

### 3.2 Lineage

The exact birthplace of Bhargav Parashurama is contested, although the history of his lineage took place in the Haihaya Kingdom located in modern-day Maheshwar.

The grandfather of Bhargava Parashurama was a great rishi named Ruchika, who was son of a famous sage Bhṛigu. Parshuram is also the kul guru of Bharadwaj and Kashyap gotra. Parshuram belongs to a gaud Brahmin of Alambayin gotra. One day, the rishi was traveling through the countryside seeking a bride. At the time, there were two dominant clans, the *Bharat-Suryavansha* or *Solar Dynasty* and the *Chandra-vamsha* or *Lunar Dynasty*. The ruling King Gadhi belonged to the Lunar Dynasty and had a beautiful daughter, Satyavati, who was unwed. Ruchika visited the King, who entertained him at his court. The rishi was besot with the beauty of Satyavati and at the end of the evening he asked the King to have her as his bride.

The King was taken aback, but could not deny the request of a Brahmin. As such, he agreed to give his daughter away to the rishi, but on condition that Ruchika give him one-thousand horses, all with one ear black and the body entirely white. The rishi agreed to the demand of the King. He then did penance to Varuna and was blessed with the horses that the King had requested. Ruchika then married Satyavati after fulfilling wishes of the King.

Satyavati adjusted well to an ascetic life as she was blessed with a good countenance, but she did not have any children. Meanwhile, at the Kingdom, her father had no heir to the throne as well and this also worried Satyavati. One day, Ruchika asked her what was wrong and she told him of her concerns for the Kingdom.

Then Ruchika helped both Satyavati and her mother. He gave Satyavati two potions, one for her mother so that she would have a mighty Kshatriya son and one for Satyavati so that she would have a son that would become a great sage. Satyavati gave the potions to her mother. However, not trusting the sage, her mother switched the containers.

In time, both mother and daughter found they were expecting children. However, the sage noticed that when he looked at his wife he saw a Kshatriya aura and he asked what had happened. Satyavati told Ruchika, to which he responded, “Now our son will be a great warrior instead of a sage.” Satyavati begged the rishi to instead make her grandson become the great warrior and her son a rishi. Seeing her distress, Ruchika acquiesced. Satyavati gave birth to a son, **Jamadagni**, who became a great **saptarishi**, while her grandson Bhargav was the sixth incarnation of Vishnu and one of the greatest warriors of all ages.

### 3.3 Birth

The exact location of Bhargav's birth is contested, although **puranas** claim that he was born at Renuka Tirth as the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. His father, Jamadagni, was a direct descendant of **Brahma**. **Renuka** gave birth to four sons before Parashurama: **Vasu**, **Visva Vasu**, **Brihudyanu** and **Brutvakanva**. Before the birth of their fifth son, Jamadagni meditated with his wife Renuka at *Tape Ka Tiba* near Renuka lake for **divine providence**. With the blessing of **Lord Shiva**, Vishnu answered their wishes and was born from the womb of Renuka as their fifth and youngest son, whom they named Rambhadra.

#### 3.3.1 Renuka & The Clay Pot

Goddess **Renuka** was known for her chastity and devotion to her husband. Such was her faith, that she was able to fetch water from the river in a pot of unbaked clay, with the pot held together only by the strength of her devotion.

One day while at the river, a group of **Gandharvas** in a chariot passed by in the sky above. Filled with desire for only a moment, the unbaked pot she held dissolved in the river. Afraid to return to her husband, she waited at the river bank, uncertain of what to do next. Meanwhile, Jamadagni noticed his wife had not returned. Through his yogic powers, he divined all that had taken place and was enraged. The rishi called his eldest son, handed him an axe and asked the boy to kill his mother. Horrified, the boy refused and so Jamadagni turned him to stone. He then asked each of his sons and as they refused, one by one, he turned them to stone. Finally only his youngest son, Parashurama was left. Ever obedient, the boy beheaded his mother.

Pleased Jamadagni then offered two boons to Parashurama. The boy asked that his mother be brought back to life and his brothers to be returned from stone to flesh.

Impressed by the affection and devotion of his son, Jamadagni granted his request.

### 3.4 Acquiring Weapons from Lord Shiva

Rama grew up to be a powerful youth. Though a Brahmin by birth, Rama expressed a lot of interest in weapons and after completing tutelage under his father who was himself a powerful archer, Rama went to the Gandhamadana mountains. Once there, he undertook severe penances to please Lord Shiva.

Lord Shiva was pleased with this, and appeared before him and asked him for a boon. Parashurama expressed his desire to obtain celestial weapons from the God. Shiva told him that he would grant the boon only when Parashurama proved himself to be a worthy soul. After years of penances, Shiva was pleased with Parashurama's devotion and summoned him. Shiva ordered Parashurama to slay the Daityas and Danavas who were the enemies of the Devas, to which the latter agreed.

After vanquishing the Daityas and Danavas in battle, Parashurama proved himself worthy and acquired the celestial weapons from Shiva.

Once, Lord Shiva challenged Shri Parashuram to a battle to test his skills in warfare. The spiritual master Lord Shiva and the disciple Shri Parashuram became locked in fierce battle, a dreadful duel that lasted for twenty one days and while evading a blow by the Trident (Trishul) of Lord Shiva, Shri Parashuram countered and vigorously attacked him with his Parashu. It struck Lord Shiva on the forehead creating a wound. Lord Shiva was very pleased to see the amazing warfare skills of his disciple and passionately embraced Shri Parashuram. Lord Shiva preserved this wound as an ornament so that the reputation of his disciple remained imperishable and insurmountable. 'Khanda-parshu' (wounded by Parashu) is one of the thousand names (for the salutation) of Lord Shiva.

### 3.5 Getting Vijaya Bow From Lord Indra

Shri Parashurama, clipped the thousand arms of **Kartavirya Arjuna** (Sahastrarjun), one by one, with his Parshu and killed him. He repelled his army by showering arrows on them. The whole country greatly welcomed the destruction of **Kartavirya Arjuna** (Sahastrarjun). The king of Deities, **Indra** was in possession of Lord Shiva's **Vijaya Dhanusha**. **Indra** was so pleased that he presented this most beloved **Vijaya** (bow) to Shri Parashurama on instruction from Lord Shiva. Dev **Indra** had destroyed demon dynasties with this bow. By the fatal arrows shot with the help of this **Vijaya** bow, Shri Parashurama de-

stroyed the miscreant **Kshatriyas** twenty one times.

Later Shri Parashurama presented the **Vijaya** bow to his disciple **Karna** when he was pleased with his intense devotion to the Guru. **Karna** used this bow to fight on the 17th day of the Kurukshetra war. **Karna** become unconquerable with help of the **Vijaya**.

### 3.6 Kartavirya Sahastrarjun and The Haihaya Kingdom

Main articles: **Kartavirya Arjuna** and **Haihayas**

The time of Parashurama was a tumultuous one for the Indian subcontinent, with **puranas** indicating frequent battles between several rival **Kshatriya** clans and kingdoms. Parashurama lived within the **Haihaya Kingdom**, located in modern-day **Maheshwar** on the banks of the **Narmada River**. The generations of enmity between the **Kshatriya Haihaya** and the **Brahmin Bhargavas**, from whom Parashurama hailed, were mentioned in the **Mahabharata** numerous times.



*Dattatreya, embodiment of the holy trinity Trimurti, whom Kartavirya worshiped and who would later deliver the Tripura Rahasya to Parashurama*

The Haihaya were ruled by a powerful and cruel King named **Kartavirya Arjuna**. He was the incarnation of **Sudarshana**, Lord Vishnu's Celestial weapon, **Chakra** that had taken birth in human form. In addition, Kartavirya

worshipped a divine being known as **Dattatreya**, embodiment of **Trimurti** and descendant of the Saptarishi **Atri**. For his obeisance, Dattatreya had granted the king a flying golden chariot that would travel wherever he wished and one-thousand arms.

With these boons, Kartavirya became immeasurably powerful, conducting many military conquests after which he made **Mahishmati** in present-day **Maheshwar** capital of his Kingdom. Kartavirya became so powerful that he was even able to defeat and imprison the demon King **Ravana** at the **Godavari**. Ravana, in turn, would later be the nemesis of the **Ramayana**.

### 3.7 The Sacred Calf, The Death of Kartavirya Arjuna & the Genocide of the Kshatriyas.

The violent persecution of Brahmins by Kshatriya had at the time spanned generations. Aurva, great-grandfather of Parashurama, recalled a vivid childhood experience:

While lying unborn, I heard the doleful cries of my mother and other women of the Bhrigu race who were then being exterminated by the Kshatriyas. When those Kshatriyas began to exterminate the Bhrigus together with unborn children of their race, it was then that wrath filled my soul. My mother and the other women of our race, each in an advanced state of pregnancy, and my father, while terribly alarmed, found not in all the worlds a single protector. Then when the Bhrigu women found not a single protector, my mother held me in one of her thighs.

— *Mahabharata 1:182*

As the third book of the Mahabharata begins, Akritavirya, a disciple of the avatar speaks:

With pleasure shall I recite that excellent history of the godlike deeds of Rama, the son of Jamadagni who traced his origin to the race of Brigu.

— *Mahabharata 3:117*

As Rama grew older, he was sincere in his piety and pleased Lord Shiva with the oblation of excruciating **tapas**. As a blessing, he was granted the **Parashu** of Shiva, after which he was known as **Parashurama** or 'Rama with axe'.

Soon after Parashurama received his blessing, King Kartavirya of the **Haihaya** came upon the hermitage of Jamadagni. The visit happened at a time Parusharama was



away in the forest gathering **yagna** and although the King had a massive entourage, the saptarishi was able to serve the King a grand feast. When Kartavirya asked how he was able to do so, Jamadagni showed him a blessed Kamadhenu calf, given to Jamadagni by **Indra**, which was able to grant wishes. Kartavirya was covetous and wanted the calf as his own. The rishi refused and Kartavirya stole the sacred animal.

Returning home, Parashurama was infuriated and traveled to the royal palace. Kartavirya sent seventeen akshauhinis to face Parashurama. Brandishing his axe, he decimated the entire Haihaya army and killed the mighty King Kartavirya, retrieving the calf. When he returned home, his father was pleased, but seeing the blood stained axe of Parashurama, also concerned. He cautioned his son he must be aware of wrath and pride. Parashurama accepted the reprimand of his father, in penance and went on a pilgrimage to holy places for one year in purification.

Meanwhile, the sons of Kartavirya discovered their father at the palace and knew that only Parashurama could have killed him. In revenge, they traveled to the hermitage and murdered Jamadagni, discharging arrows into him like killing a stag. Afterwards, they decapitated his body and took his head with them.

When Parashurama returned home, he found his mother next to the body of his father, crying hysterically as she beat her breast twenty one times in a row. Furious, he hunted down the sons of Kartavirya at the palace. He killed them all and returned with the head of his father to conduct the cremation. Parashurama then vowed to enact a genocide on the war-mongering Kshatriyas twenty one times over, once for each time his mother's hand hit her chest.

### 3.7.1 Vengeance Against Kshatriya

Parashurama then travelled the whole of Earth, killing all men of the Kshatriya caste, guilty or innocent. The first book of the Mahabharata reveals:

In the interval between the Treta and Dwapara Yugas, Parashurama, great among all who have borne arms, urged by impatience of wrong, repeatedly smote the noble race of Kshatriyas. And when that fiery meteor, by his own valour, annihilated the entire tribe of the Kshatriyas, he formed at Samanta-panchaka five lakes of blood.

— *Mahabharata* 1:2

One legend describes Parashurama returning to a village after battle in what is now the Badami Taluka, in the **Bagalkot** district of **Karnataka**. While the warrior-sage washed his axe in the river Malaprabha, unknown to him, downstream beyond a bend in the river, village women



*Parashurama returning with the sacred calf with Jamadagni cautioning him to not be controlled by anger*

were cleaning their clothes. His mighty axe stained the entire river red and the women exclaimed “Ai hole!” translating to ‘Oh, what a river!’ This is said to be the etymology of the present-day village **Aihole**.

There is another legend that some of the fisherman community of Kerala who were settled in the coastal areas, receiving word as Parashurama approached, took the fisherman thread split it into two sacred threads that marked them twice-born, hid them in the forest and traveled south. Parashurama then gave their land to them.

After he had finally rid the world of Kshatriyas, Parashurama conducted the **Ashvamedha** sacrifice, done only by sovereign kings and gave the land he had conquered to the Brahmin head-priests, who performed the **yagya** **Kashyapa**. After seeing the impoverished condition of some Brahmins in northern India involved in priestly services Parashurama gave him the land that he had conquered. The Ashvamedha demanded that the remaining Kshatriya kings either submit to Parashurama or stop the sacrifice by defeating him in battle. They were unable to do either and so perished.

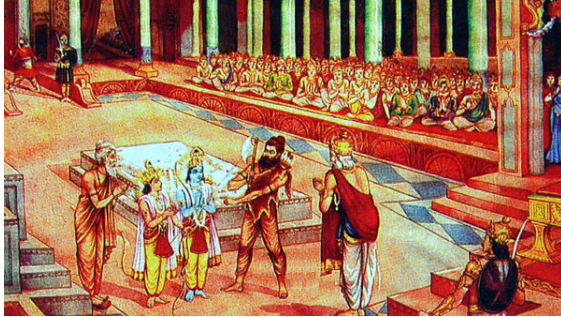
## 3.8 Ramayana

Parashurama is unique in that although he is the sixth avatar of Vishnu, as an immortal, he has also lived to see the subsequent incarnations of Vishnu in **Rama** and



Krishna. Parashurama played an important role in both Ramayana and Mahabharata.

### 3.8.1 Shiva's Bow



*Meeting of Rama and Parashurama*

In the Ramayana, Parashurama had given the bow of Shiva to King Janaka, the father of princess Sita for her swayamvar. As a test of worthiness, suitors were asked to lift and string the mystic weapon. None were successful until Rama, but in the process of being strung, the bow snapped in half. This produced a tremendous noise that reached the ears of Parashurama as he meditated atop the Mahendra Mountains.

In Valmiki Ramayana, Parashurama stops the journey of Sri Rama and his family after his marriage to Sita. He threatens to kill Sri Rama and his father, King Dasharatha, begs him to forgive his son and punish him instead. Parashurama neglects Dasharatha and invokes Sri Rama for a challenge. Sri Rama met his challenge.

In one version played in Ramlilas across India, Parashurama arrived to the scene deeply angry. The Kshatriyas were advised by Brahmarishi Vasistha not to confront the sage, but Sita still approached. Parashurama blessed her, saying “Dheergha Sumangali bhavah,” or “You will have your husband alive for your lifetime.”

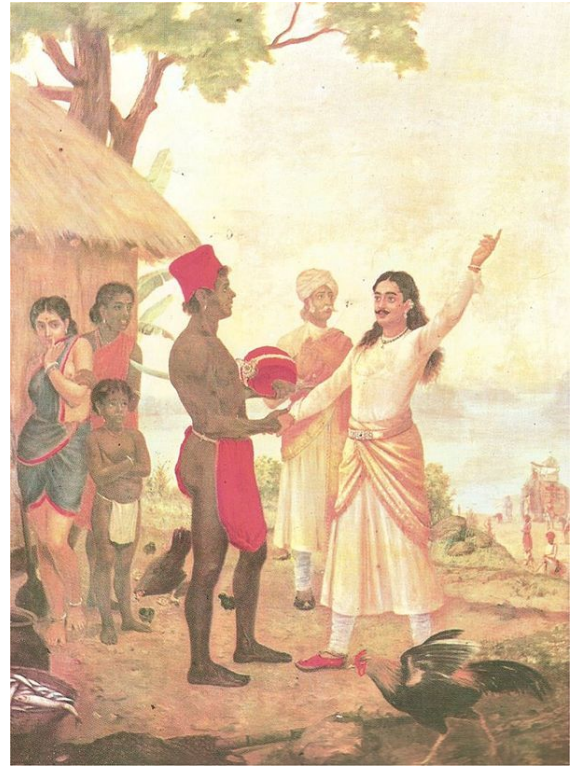
When he then turned to confront Rama, Parashurama was unable to lift his axe. He was held back by his own word and pacified by the brilliance of Rama. When the warrior-sage realized he was looking at his own subsequent reincarnation, his own bow flew to Rama along with the essence of Vishnu, and thus the seventh avatar was fully realized.

## 3.9 Mahabharata

### 3.9.1 Vow of Bhishma

*For more see Vow of Bhishma.*

Parashurama and Bhishma, two of the greatest warriors of the epics, shared an interesting history together as guru



*Bhishma taking the bhishana pratigya*

and student. Bhishma was a Kuru prince and Parashurama instructed him in the martial arts as a boy. Their conflict began years later, with the beautiful princess Amba. Along with her sisters Ambika and Ambalika, Princess Amba had been abducted by Bhishma in a misunderstanding between two kingdoms. Now, with her honor tainted, no man would take her for bride and she was condemned to remain destitute. Bhishma himself was unable to marry due to his *bhishana pratigya*, or vow of celibacy and allegiance to Hastinapur. Amba then sought the help of Parashurama to kill Bhishma.

Taking pity on her plight, the avatar agreed to fight his former student on her behalf. The battle lasted twenty-three days, by the end of which, both warriors were bloodied and pierced by arrows. On the 23rd day of battle, Bhishma attempted to use the Prashwapastra against Parashurama. Learned of in his previous birth as Prabhasa (one of the Ashta Vasus), this weapon was unknown to Parashurama and would put the afflicted to sleep in the battlefield. This would have given Bhishma the victory. Before he could release it, however, a voice from the sky warned him that “if he uses this weapon it would be a great insult towards his Guru.”

Pitrs then appeared and obstructed the chariot of Parashurama, forbidding him from fighting any longer. The spirit of Parashurama’s father, Jamadagni and his grandfather, Ruchika, spoke to him:

O son, never again engage in battle with Bhishma or any other Kshatriya. Heroism

and courage in battle are the qualities of a Kshatriya and study of the Vedas and the practice of austerities are the wealth of the Brahmins. Previously, you took up weapons to protect the Brahmins, but this is not the case now. Let this battle with Bhishma be your last. O son of the Bhṛigu race, it is not possible to defeat Bhishma.

— *Mahabharata* 188:5

In the end, the Gods showered praise on Bhishma and he sought the blessing of Parashurama as his guru. The avatar then acknowledged that his former student was truly invincible, telling Amba:

Using even the very best of weapons I have not been able to obtain any advantage over Bhishma, that foremost of all wielders of weapons! I have exerted now to the best of my power and might. Seek the protection of Bhishma himself, you have no other refuge now.

— *Mahabharata* 189:1

### 3.9.2 Mentorship Of Drona

At the end of his time in the Vedic period, Parashurama was renouncing his possessions to become a *sannyasi*. As the day progressed, *Drona*, then a poor Brahmin, approached Parashurama asking for alms. By that time, the warrior-sage had already given the Brahmins his gold and Kashyapa his land, so all that was left were his body and weapons. Parashurama asked which Drona would have, to which the clever Brahmin responded:

O son of Bhṛigu, it behoveth thee to give me all thy weapons together with the mysteries of hurling and recalling them.

— *Mahabharata* 7:131

Thus, Parashurama gave all his weapons unto Drona, making him supreme in the science of arms. This becomes crucial as *Drona* later became the guru to both the *Pandavas* and the *Kauravas* who fought against each other in the Kurukshetra War.

It is said that Lord Parashurama carried Lord Vishnu's "Sudharshana Chakra" and "Bow" and Lord Balram's "Gadha" while they fulfilled their education with Guru Sandipani.

### 3.9.3 Fate Of Karna

Karna was half brother to the *Pandavas* and the son of *Surya*, but was raised by a Suta charioteer. Karna lies to

Parashurama that he is a Brahmin and a descendant of Brigu Maharishi. Parashurama then accepts him as his student and teaches him of all the powerful *Brahmanda astra* weapons. Parashurama trains Karna to such a point that he declares Karna to be equal to himself in the art of warfare and archery.

One day, as Parashurama slept, resting his head on the lap of Karna, a scorpion crawled up the leg of the student and bit Karna's thigh. In spite of the pain, Karna neither flinched nor cried to avoid disturbing his guru's rest. Warm blood, however, trickled down his leg and woke Parashurama. In some versions, Lord *Indra* became afraid of the fighting prowess of Karna and he himself took the form of a bee and stung Karna's thigh in order to benefit his son *Arjuna*.<sup>[4]</sup> Convinced that only a Kshatriya could have borne such pain in silence, Parashurama realized that Karna had lied and cursed his student that his knowledge would fail him when it was most crucial. Upon Karna's pleading, Parashurama gifted him the celestial weapon called Bhargavastra, along with his personal bow called Vijaya, for being such a diligent student.

Years later, during the Kurukshetra war, Karna had a dream in which he envisioned his guru and asked him to take back the curse he had placed years back. Parashurama revealed that he had known all along *Karna* was a Kshatriya, but because he was a worthy student Parashurama had instructed him regardless. The avatar explained to *Karna* that the *Brahmanda astra* had to fail him when he needed it most. If he killed *Arjuna*, *Duryodhana* would be king instead of *Yudhishtira* and chaos would ensue. Parashurama asked Karna to accept his curse and asked him to die at the hands of *Arjuna*, so that the world might live in peace. Karna accepted his guru's words and in return the grateful guru, Parashurama blessed Karna with immortal glory and everlasting fame.

All three students of Parashurama - Bhishma, Drona and Karna fought on the Kaurava side (for different reasons) and were killed by unfair tricks.

## 3.10 Different Epochs

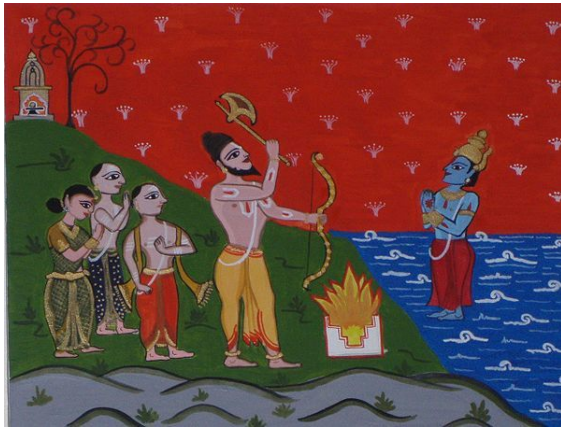
There are a number of stories of Parashurama in different Puranas, detailing his interactions with different gods of the Hindu pantheon and even occurring during different *Yuga* due to his being *Chiranjivi*.

### 3.10.1 Ekadanta

According to *Puranas*, Parashurama travelled to the *Himalayas* to pay respect to his teacher, *Shiva*. While travelling, his path was blocked by *Ganesha*, son of *Shiva* and *Parvati*. Parashurama threw his axe at the elephant-god. *Ganesha*, knowing the weapon had been given to Parashurama by his father, allowed it to sever his left tusk.

His mother Parvati was infuriated and declared she would cut off the arms of Parashurama. She took the form of **Durga**, becoming omnipotent, but at the last moment, Shiva was able to pacify her by making her see the avatar as her own son. Parashurama also asked her forgiveness and she finally relented when Ganesha himself spoke on behalf of the warrior-saint. Parashurama then gave his divine axe to Ganesha and blessed him. Another name for Ganesha because of this encounter is *Ekadanta*, or 'One Tooth'.

### 3.10.2 Beating Back The Arabian Sea



*Lord Parashurama with Saraswat Brahmin settlers demanding Varuna make the seas recede to save the lands of Konkan and Kerala*

Puranas write that the western coast of India was threatened by tumultuous waves and tempests, causing the land to be overcome by the sea. Parashurama fought back the advancing waters, demanding **Varuna** release the land of **Konkan** and **Malabar**. During their fight, Parashurama threw his axe into the sea. A mass of land rose up, but Varuna told him that because it was filled with salt, the land would be barren.

Parashurama then performed a *tapasya* for **Nagaraja**, the King of Snakes. Parashurama asked him to spread serpents throughout the land so their venom would neutralize the salt filled earth. Nagaraja agreed and a lush and fertile land grew. Thus, Parashurama pushed back the coastline between the foothills of the **Western Ghats** and the Arabian Sea, creating modern day **Kerala**.

The coastal area of **Kerala**, **Konkan**, **Karnataka**, **Goa** and **Maharashtra**, are today also known as *Parashurama Kshetra* or *Land of Parashurama* in homage. Puranas record that Parashurama placed statues of Shiva at 108 different locations throughout the reclaimed land, which still exist today. Shiva, is the source of **Kundalini energy** and it around his neck that Nagaraja is coiled and so the statues were in gratitude for their baneful cleansing of the land.

Then he took a winnowing basket, or *Surpa*, and threw

it at the sea. The water retreated and from the place the basket fell at Gokarna, land rose again. This land is called **Kerala**, or '**Siirparaka**' (**Brahmanda Purana**, Chapters 98 and 99). It is also said that while beating back the sea, Parashurama fired an arrow from his mystical bow that landed in **Goa** at Benaulim, creating *Salkache Tollem* or 'Lotus Lake'.

### 3.10.3 Request To Shiva

According to Hindu tradition, **Parshurama** reclaimed the land of Konkan after donating the earth to Maharshi **Kashyap**. Then he requested different Gods and Goddesses to settle in the newly created land and to take responsibility of various clans. Parshuram, being a devotee of Shiva, requested Shiva to give him audience everyday, while he is living in the newly created land. Lord Shiva accepted his request. Lord Parshuram also brought 60 'Vipras' to settle in Konkan. One such Vipra named 'Vyad' installed a Shivalinga at Guhagar. In this era, since evil thoughts are supposed to prevail, Gods are to remain in their invisible forms. Accordingly, Lord Shiva decided to remain invisible in the Shivalinga installed by Vyad Muni. This same Shivalinga is the well known **Vyadeshwar**. Thus, Lord Shiva stays at **Guhagar** in the 'Vyadeshwar' Shivalinga from those years thereto now. According to another history, in the era of King Sakuran, the Vyadeshwar Shivalinga was re-invented and the Temple, which we see today, was constructed.

### 3.10.4 Rambhoja

Kshetra scripture has a legend in which a king named Ramabhoja worshipped Parashurama. He was the ruler of the lands between Gokarna and Kanyakumari and was proclaimed king of the entire Parashurama Kshetra. While performing **aswamedha yajna**, he was plowing the land, but mistakenly killed a snake that was a **raksha** in disguise. In repentance, Rambhoja was directed by Parashurama to build a *rajathatpeetha* or large silver pedestal, with the image of a serpent at its four corners in obeisance. Parashurama also ordered that he distribute gold to the needy equal to his own weight as **Tulabhara**.

Rambhoja performed the ashwamedha yajna successfully and Parashurama appeared before him again, declaring that he was pleased. To this day, the **silver pedestal** remains a center of pilgrimage. The surrounding land is known as **Thoulava**, in remembrance of the Tulabhara of Rambhoja.

### 3.10.5 Surya

Parashurama once became annoyed with the sun god **Surya** for making too much heat. The warrior-sage shot several arrows into the sky, terrifying Surya. When





*Surya, the sun god, riding across the sky in his chariot*

Parashurama ran out of arrows and sent his wife Dhara to bring more, the sun god then focused his rays on her, causing her to collapse. Surya then appeared before Parashurama and gave him two inventions that have since been attributed to the avatar, sandals and an umbrella.

### 3.10.6 Dattatreya

Nath tradition holds that Parashurama, after enacting his vengeance, sought out Dattatreya atop Mount Gandhamadana for spiritual guidance. Their conversations gave rise to Tripura-rahasya, a treatise on Advaita Vedanta. It was here the deity instructed the warrior-sage on knowledge of scripture, renunciation of worldly activities and non-duality, thus freeing him from the karmic cycle of death and rebirth.

## 3.11 Kalaripayattu

Parashurama and the saptarishi Agastya are regarded as the founders of kalaripayattu, the oldest martial art in the world. Parashurama was a master in the art of weaponry, as taught to him by Shiva. As such, he developed northern kalaripayattu or vadakkan kalari, with more emphasis on weapons than striking and grappling. Southern kalaripayattu was developed by Agastya and focuses more on weaponless combat. Kalaripayattu is known as the 'mother of all martial arts'.

Bodhidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism, also practiced kalaripayattu. When he traveled to China to spread Buddhism, he brought the martial art with him, which in turn was adapted to become the basis of Shaolin Kung Fu.

## 3.12 Sanyasi & End Time

By the end of the Vedic period, Parashurama had grown weary of bloodshed and became a sannyasi, giving up his possessions to practice penance. The first book of the Mahabharata writes:

The son of Jamadagni, after twenty-one times making the Earth bereft of Kshatriyas, wended to that best of Mountains Mahendra and there began his ascetic penance.

— Mahabharata 1:14

He traveled to central India at the northern end of the Eastern Ghats and Western Odisha and ascended the Mahendra Mountains. Before he left, Parashurama distributed the territories he conquered among a clan of Brahmins called the Bhumihaar, who ruled for many centuries. Kingdoms included the Cheras, Pandyas, Dravida, Mushika, Karnata and Konkana.

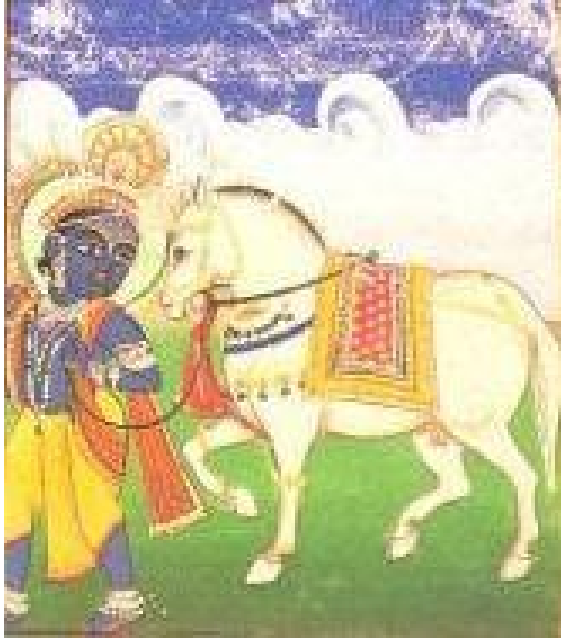
Unlike other incarnations of Vishnu, Parashurama is a Chiranjivi and is said to still be doing penance today in Mahendragiri. The Kalki Purana writes that he will reemerge at the end of Kali Yuga to be the martial and spiritual guru of Kalki, the tenth and final avatar of Vishnu. It is foretold that he will instruct Kalki to perform a difficult penance to Shiva, and receive the celestial weaponry needed to bring about end time.

Along with the sages Vyasa, Kripa and Ashwatthama, Parashurama is considered to be foremost among the rishis in Kaliyuga. Parashurama will also become one of the Saptarishi in the 8th Manvantara along with sages Vyasa, Kripa and Ashwatthama.

## 3.13 Parashurama Temples

There are numerous temples and statues of Parashurama throughout the Indian subcontinent, some of which include:

- Parashurama temple, Attirala, a vernacular name for Hatyarala. Cuddapah district, Andhra Pradesh.
- Parshurama temple, Sohmag, Salempur, Deoria District, Uttar Pradesh
- Parashurama Kunda, Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh, where Parashuram washed his sins after committing matricide



*Kalki, tenth and final avatar of Vishnu*

- Akhnoor, Jammu, Jammu and Kashmir
- Fort [Songadh], Gujarat
- Gudimallam, Chittoor, Andhra Pradesh
- Harpur, Zamania, Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh
- Jalalabad, Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh
- Kumbhalgarh, Rajasthan
- Khatti, near Phagwara, Punjab, India
- Maniyar, Ballia, Uttar Pradesh
- Mahurgarh, Maharashtra
- Parashurama Mandir, Chiplun, Maharashtra
- Sri Kalakama Parashurama Temple, Darbetadka, Belthangady, Karnataka
- Shree Parashurama Temple, Sanyasikatte, Karnataka
- Parashurama Temple, Banavasi, Karnataka
- Painguinim, Canacona, Goa
- Rajkot, Gujarat
- Shivpuri, Akkalkot, Khopoli, Maharashtra
- Shivsar Talao Pond Statue, Phalodi, Jodhpur, Rajasthan
- Sri Parasurama Swamy Temple, Thiruvallam, 6 km south of Thiruvananthapuram Kerala
- Tosh, Manikaran, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh
- Padubelle, Udupi, Karnataka, India
- Kojra, Sirohi, Rajasthan, India
- Parashurama Mandir, Mokama, Bihar, India
- Janapav Hill, Indore, M.P. Peoples are considered this as Birth place of Parshuram
- Parshuram Kutiya, Nirmand, Kullu, Himachal Pradesh

### 3.14 Parashurama Kshetras

Seven Kshetras are popularly known as Parashurama Kshetras or Parashurama Srishti.<sup>[5]</sup>

1. Udupi
2. kukke Subramanya
3. Kumbasi
4. Koteshwara
5. Shankaranarayana
6. Kollur
7. Gokarna

### 3.15 See also

- Bhagavad Gita
- Chiranjivi
- End time
- Haihayas
- Heheya Kingdom
- Kalachuri Kingdom
- Parasuram Express
- Ramayana

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- Parashurama Patrika Quarterly Magazine
- Bhagwan Parashuram-K M Munshi

### 3.18 External links

- Media related to [Parashuram](#) at Wikimedia Commons
- [108 Parashurama Kshetras](#) published by Shaivam and Google Maps

## Chapter 4

# Renuka

For other uses, see Renuka (disambiguation).

**Reṇukā** is a Hindu goddess worshipped predominantly in the indian state of Maharashtra<sup>[1]</sup> and the south indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karanataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana.<sup>[2]</sup> The Temple at Mahur dedicated to Goddess Renuka in Maharashtra is considered one of the shakti peethas.<sup>[3]</sup>

### 4.1 Different names

**Renuka** or **Yellamma** or **Ekvira** or **Ellai amman** or **Ellai amma** (Kannada: ಯೆಲ್ಲಮ್ಮ ಯೆಲ್ಲಮ್ಮ ಯೆಲ್ಲಮ್ಮ, Marathi: श्री रेणुका/ येल्लुआई, Telugu: యెల్లమ్మ యెల్లమ్మ యెల్లమ్మ, Tamil: ரேணுகா) is worshiped as the Goddess (devi) of the fallen, in the Hindu pantheon. Yellamma is the patron Goddess of the south Indian states of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Her devotees revere her as the “Mother of the Universe” or “Jagadamba”.

### 4.2 Origin story

The legends of Renuka are contained in the Mahabharata, the Harivamsa and in the Bhagavata Purana.



*Renuka Sagara, Malaprabha River, Saundatti, North Karnataka, Karnataka*

#### 4.2.1 Early life

King Reṇuka (father of Reṇukā) performed a **yajna** — a ritual performed to maintain peace and good health. He was blessed with a daughter, who originated from the fire of this yajna. Reṇukā was a bright and active child and became the most beloved child of her parents.

When she was eight, Agastya, who was the guru of king Reṇuka, advised him to have his daughter married to Jamadagni when she reached maturity. Jamadagni was the son of Ruchik Muni and Satyavati and had obtained the blessings of the gods by performing severe penance. Renuka and Jamdagni Muni lived in the Ramshrung mountains, near the present day Savadatti area of Belgaum district. Renuka helped the Jamdagni Muni in all of his tasks of performing various rituals and puja. Gradually she became close and dear to Jamdagni. After a while Renuka Raj was blessed with another daughter called Anjana (Anjana Devi). Renuka would wake up early in the morning to bathe in the Malaprabha River with complete concentration and devotion. Her devotion was so powerful that she was able to create a pot to hold water made only of sand, one fresh pot every day. She would fill this pot, on the bank of the river and would use a snake which was nearby, turning it into a rope-like convolution and placing it on her head, so that it supported the pot. Thus, she brought the water to Jamdagni for his rituals of oblation. (“Renuka” is derived from the Sanskrit for “fine grain of sand”.) Another temple of Renuka is situated at near Zamania, Ghazipur.

#### 4.2.2 Later life

Renuka gave birth to five sons: Vasu, Viswa Vasu, Brihudyanu, Brutwakanwa and Rambhadra. Rambhadra was the youngest and most beloved, gaining the favour of Lord Shiva and Parvati and hence called Parashurama (the sixth incarnation of Vishnu).<sup>[4]</sup> One day when Renuka went to the river, she saw Gandharva spirits playing. These were young couples carelessly frolicking in the water with abandon. For a moment, she lost her concentration and devotion to her husband faltered for a moment as she was physically attracted to one of the Gandharvas. As she was distracted, she lost her power of collecting

water in unbaked pots, which she had gotten from her chastity. She lost the water which she had collected. Disappointed by this, she returned to the **ashram** in shame. Seeing Renuka returning empty-handed, **Jamadagni** became furious and angrily ordered her to go away.

After being cursed by her husband, Renuka went east and sat in the forest to meditate. In her penance, she met with the saints Eknath and Joginath; she prayed to them and asked to gain the mercy of her husband. They first consoled her, then instructed her to follow their advice exactly as told. They told her to purify herself, first bathing in a nearby lake, and then to worship a **Shivalinga**, which they had given to her. Next, she should go to the nearby town and beg for rice from the houses (this ritual, called “Joga Bedodu”, is still carried out by women during a particular month in Karnataka). After collecting the rice, she was to give half to the saints and cook the remaining half, adding jaggery, partaking of the cooked rice with full devotion. They said that if she performed this ritual for three days, she would be able to visit her husband on the fourth day.



*Yellamma temple at Badami.*

Knowing the anger of Jamadagni, they warned her that she may not be fully pardoned by him, and that she would have to experience the most difficult time of her life for a few minutes. “After that,” they said, “you will be eternally revered and will be blessed with your husband. You will be worshiped by all the people henceforth.” After blessing her this way, they disappeared. Renuka followed their instructions with devotion and worshipped the Shivalinga with full care and reverence. On the fourth day, she went to see her husband.

### 4.2.3 Punishment and resurrection

Jamadagni was still furious with Renuka and ordered his sons to punish their mother. One by one, four of them refused flatly. Jamadagni, who possessed the power to burn anyone to ashes with his one look, went berserk and turned the four of his sons into ashes. **Parashurama**, who was not there when this happened, found his mother

weeping by the piles of ashes when he arrived and his father was still raging mad. Jamadagni told him what happened and ordered him to behead his mother for her infidelity. Parashurama had to think quickly. Knowing his father’s powers and the extent of his anger, Parashurama immediately obeyed his father, using his axe.



*Renuka temple at Yallammagudi, Saundatti, North Karnataka, Karnataka*

His father then offered a boon to Parashurama, who asked for his mother and brothers to be brought back to life. To everybody’s astonishment, Renuka’s spirit multiplied and moved to different regions. Renuka was back as a whole too. This miracle inspired her sons and others to become her followers, and worship her.

### 4.2.4 Renuka vs. Yellamma

In many traditions, Renuka and Yellamma are taken to be two names for the same goddess. However, there is also an oral tradition that distinguishes between the two. According to these tales, Renuka fled to a low-caste community when her son Parashurama was coming to kill her. He found and beheaded her, along with a low-caste woman who had tried to protect her. When he later brought them back to life, he mistakenly attached the woman’s head to Renuka’s body, and vice versa. Jamadagni accepted the former as his wife Renuka, while the latter remained to be worshipped by the lower castes as Yellamma, the mother of all. Matangi, Renuka, and Yellamma are all names of the Goddess.<sup>[5]</sup>

### 4.3 Temples and related places

Every year, there is a gathering of as many as 200,000 of her devotees at the Yellamma Gudi temple (Yallamma Temple in Google Earth) in Saundatti.

Another Very famous Temple of Renuka Yellamma is located in Bidarahalli, Gadag, Karnataka, India. Many devotees from different region come to temple in the month of kartik to celebrate Karthik of Renuka-Yellamma. It is Believed that after marriage with sage Jamadagni, Renuka devi lived in this place. Renuka used to wake up early in morning and have bath in the holy Tungabhadra River. With complete concentration and devotion to fill the pot, which she used to prepare out of the sand on the bank the river and would hold the snake which was there and turn it into a convolution and place it on head so that it supported to the pot. She bought the pot to Jamdagni for performance of rituals. Another temple Renukambe [Yellamma] is atop a hill in Chandragutti, Soraba Taluk in Shimoga. This temple is an example of ancient architecture and dates back to the Kadamba period. Another temple is in Mahur, Maharashtra, the supposed birthplace of the goddess, which finds mention in *Devi Gita*, the final chapter of *Devi Bhagawatam* as, “Matripura in the Sahyadri mountain; here the Devi Renuka dwells...”.<sup>[6]</sup> Another temple becoming famous is Nalgonda, Telangana where Tuesday is main auspicious day.



Renuka Lake in Himachal Pradesh

Renuka Lake in the Renuka Sanctuary in Himachal Pradesh is named after the goddess. According to one legend, King Sahasrarjuna (Kartavirya Arjuna) wanted the Kamdhenu cow from Jamadagni and Renuka. So for this he killed Jamadagni, and Renuka became sati along with Jamadagni at Mahurgadh, Maharashtra.<sup>[7]</sup> In Tamil Nadu, Renugambal Amman Temple is situated in Padavedu, Thiruvannamalai District and it is one of the most important Sakthi Sthalas.<sup>[8]</sup> Another powerful temple of Renuka Parameshwari is located in Tiruchampalli near Sembanarkoil in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu.

Goddess Renuka and Lord Jamdagni Muni are worshiped in villages around Yamuna river in Rawain valley of Uttarkashi district in Uttaranchal. Many ancient temples in the region are dedicated to the divine couple- the fa-



Renugambal Amman Temple Padavedu, Thiruvannamalai District

mous being the Jamadagni temple at Thaan village near the bank of Yamuna and Renuka temples in uphill village of Devadokhri, Banchangaon, and Sarnaul. The region has an age old tradition of celebrations in commemoration of the local deities, and managing the temple affairs and customs. The priesthood is claimed on the basis of ancestry and merit both, and mainly held by Khanduri, Semwal, and Dimri Brahmins of Uttaranchal. The week-long annual festivities in the month of June are main attraction for the devotees around the region.

### 4.4 In Sri Lanka

In ancient Sri Lanka, “Renuka” was the name of a minor goddess of wanton death and destruction, although at certain times was also a symbol of creativity and vibrancy.

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## Chapter 5

# Jamadagni



*Jamadagni telling about the Kartyaveerarjuna fault to Parashurama*

In Hindu mythology, **Jamadagni** (or **Jamdagni**, Sanskrit: जमदग्नि) is one of the **Saptarishis** (Seven Great Sages **Rishi**) in the seventh, current **Manvantara**. He is the father of **Parashurama**, the sixth incarnation of **Vishnu**.<sup>[1]</sup> He was a descendant of the sage **Bhrigu**, one of the **Prajapatis** created by **Brahma**, the God of Creation. Jamadagni had five children with wife **Renuka**, the youngest of whom was **Parashurama**, an avatar of Lord **Vishnu**. Jamadagni was well versed in the scriptures and weaponry without formal instruction.

### 5.1 Early life

A descendant of sage **Bhrigu**, Jamadagni literally meaning consuming fire, was born to sage **Richika** and **Satyavati**, daughter of **Kshatriya** king **Gaadh**.<sup>[2]</sup> Growing up

he studied hard and achieved erudition on the **Vedas**. He went to King **Prasenjit**, of solar dynasty or *Suryavansha*, and asked for his daughter **Renuka**'s hand in marriage. Subsequently, they were married, and the couple had five sons **Vasu**, **Viswa Vasu**, **Brihudyanu**, **Brutwakanwa** and **Rambhadra**, later known as **Parshurama**.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup>

### 5.2 Killing of Renuka

**Renuka** was a devoted wife and a power of her chastity that was manifest. Such was her chastity, that she used to fetch water from the river in a pot made of unbaked clay every day, held together only by the power of her devotion to Jamadagni.

One day while at the river, a group of **Gandharvas** passed by in the sky above in a chariot. Filled with desire for only a moment, the unbaked pot that she was carrying dissolved into the river. Afraid to go back to her husband, she waited at the river bank.

Meanwhile Jamadagni noticed that his wife had not yet returned from the river. Through his yogic powers, he divined all that had taken place and was filled with rage. Jamadagni called his eldest son, told him what had happened and asked him to execute his mother. Horror-stricken, his son refused to perform this deed. He then asked all of his sons, and as they refused, he turned them one by one to stone. Finally only his youngest son, **Parashurama**, was left. Ever-obedient and righteous, **Parashurama** beheaded his mother with an axe.

Pleased, Jamadagni offered two boons to **Parashurama**. **Parashurama** asked that his mother's head be restored to life and his brothers to be turned from stone back to flesh. Impressed by his sons devotion and affection, Jamadagni granted the boons. His brothers and mother were reformed from stone without having the memory of experiencing death as an additional wish of **Parashurama**. The purpose of this trial was to demonstrate the **dharma** ("divine duty") of a son towards his father.

### 5.3 Death

Jamadagni was later visited by the Haihaya king Kartavirya Arjuna (who was said to have thousand arms/hands), who he served a feast using a divine cow called KAMDHENU. Wanting the animal for himself, the king offered wealth to Jamadagni which he refused. Then the king forcefully took the Kamdhenu with him asking Jamadagni to take it back if possible, but by the means of war, which Jamadagni was not willing to.

Knowing this fact and enraged, Parashurama killed the king, and retrieved the Kamdhenu by killing all of the army of the king Kartavirya Arjuna by himself alone. Later, three sons of the king killed Jamdagni because he was the father of Parashurama who had killed their father, that felt them the proper revenge of eye-for-an-eye. They first stabbed twenty-one times to Jamdagni and then sliced his head.

Again enraged, Parashurama killed all three brothers and retrieved the head of his father for cremation, and ultimately enacted a genocide on the kshatriya caste throughout the Indian subcontinent for the next twenty-one generations since his father was stabbed by kshatriya twenty-one times.

### 5.4 Buddhism

In the Buddhist Vinaya Pitaka section of the Mahavagga (I.245)<sup>[5]</sup> the Buddha pays respect to Jamadagni by declaring that the Vedas in their true form were revealed to the original Vedic rishis, including Jamadagni.<sup>[6][7]</sup>

### 5.5 References

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## 5.6 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

### 5.6.1 Text

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