

AGASTYA-ĀŚRAMA. The Purāṇas make mention of several āśramas connected with sage Agastya. The Pāṇḍavas during their exile visited an āśrama of this name. This is situated near Pañcavaṭī twentyfour miles to the south-east of Nāsik. It is known as Agastya-giri now. (Śloka 20, Chapter 80; and Śloka 1, Chapter 96 of Vana Parva, M.B.).

The Mahābhārata mentions another Agastya-Āśrama near Prayāga. Dharmaputra along with Saint Lomaśa stayed here for some time. Vālmīki describes an āśrama of this name which Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa visited during their exile in the forests. (Chapter 11, Āraṇya Kāṇḍa of the Rāmāyaṇa).

AGASTYA TĪRTHA. This is one of the five tīrthas or sacred places of worship lying scattered in the southern ocean. The other four are the following: (1) The Saubhadra tīrtha (2) The Pauloma tīrtha (3) The Kārandhama tīrtha and (4) the Atipāvana tīrtha. These five were known as Pañca tīrthas and many saints used to live there. There lived in each of these tīrthas one huge and fierce crocodile and all the saints living there, afraid of these crocodiles, deserted their places one by one. (Ref : Śloka 3, Chapter 220 of Ādi Parva, M.B. For more details see under Pañca tīrtha).

AGASTYA VATA. This is a sacred shrine in the neighbourhood of the Himālayas. Arjuna paid a visit to this place while he was living with his brothers in the forests during their period of exile. (Śloka 2, Chapter 214 of Ādi Parva, M.B.).

AGATI. A city. Two sons Takṣaka and Chatraketu were born to Lakṣmaṇa (the brother of Śrī Rāma) by his wife Urmilā. The court of the eldest prince Takṣaka was situated in the city of Agati. Formerly this place was known as Kanakhala and was occupied by forest tribes. Exterminating these forest tribes, Lakṣmaṇa built a city there and apportioned it to his eldest son Takṣaka. (Uttara Rāmāyaṇa).

AGHA. The name of an asura. This asura was one of the followers of Kaṁsa. According to the instructions of Kaṁsa, Agha once set out to Gokula to kill Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At that time Śrī Kṛṣṇa was playing on the banks of the river Kālindī with other cowherds. Aghāsura watched the games of the children from the sky above. Then he transformed himself into a colossal serpent and lay with his mouth wide open; his open mouth looked like an immense cave. The foul smell coming from his mouth soon spread over the whole place. Śrī Kṛṣṇa and the other children did not know anything about this. In the course of their games they walked into the cave-like mouth of Agha and were soon trapped in his belly. Agha then closed his mouth and all the boys including Śrī Kṛṣṇa were now imprisoned inside his body. Some of the boys died. Realizing the situation Śrī Kṛṣṇa now enlarged his body. His body grew larger and larger until at last it burst open the body of the serpent (Agha). Thus Agha was killed. Śrī Kṛṣṇa then restored the dead boys to life by his divine looks (Kaṭākṣa). This Aghāsura was the brother of Bakāsura and Pūtanā. (Bhāgavata, Skandha 10, Chapter 12).

AGHAMARŚANA. He was a great hermit of austerity, who had observed the duties pertaining to Vānaprastha (the third of the four stages of life—forest hermit). (M.B., Śānti Parva, Chapter 244, Stanza 16).

AGHAMARŚANA SŪKTA. This is a hymn in the Rgveda. It is said that all sins will be eliminated, if this hymn is recited three times, standing in water.

AGHĀRDDANAVAMI. (See the word NAVAMĪ VRATA).

AGHĀŚVA. A King hermit (Rājarsi) named Pedu. (Rgveda, Maṇḍala 1, Anuvāka 17, Sūkta 116).

AGNI.

1) *Genealogy.* Agni was descended from Viṣṇu in this order : Viṣṇu-Brahmā-Aṅgiras-Bṛhaspati-Agni.

2) *Birth.* We come across several contradictory statements in the Purāṇas regarding the birth of Agni. There is some real difficulty, therefore, in tracing correctly the true genealogy of Agni. The one given above is based on statements in Bhāgavata and Mahābhārata. Aṅgiras is one of the six mind-born sons of Brahmā.* Aṅgiras married Śraddhā and got four daughters and two sons. Bṛhaspati was one of the sons and Utatthya was the other. The daughters were Sinivālī, Kuhū, Rākā and Anumati. (There is a mention of a third son named Saṁvarta in the Bhāgavata by Eluthassan though the original quoted below does not say so)

Śraddhā tu aṅgirasah patnī
Catasro 'sutaṅyākāḥ
Sinivālī Kuhū Rākā
Caturthya 'anumatistathā
Tatputrāvaparāvastām
Khyātau svārocise'ntare
Utatthyo bhagavān sāksāt
Brahmiṣṭhaśca Bṛhaspatiḥ.

Bṛhaspati married Cāndramasī and got six divine sons. Of these Saṁyu, the eldest, married Satyā and Agni was born to Saṁyu of Satyā. (Ślokas 1 to 4, Chapter 219, Āraṇya Kāṇḍa of Malayālam Mahābhārata).

3) *Agni—One of the Aṣṭa-dik-pālakas.* (Aṣṭa=eight, dik=zone, pālaka=guardian). The Devī Bhāgavata states in its eighth chapter that Agni is one of the eight guards posted at the eight different zones to protect the universe. Indra guards the east; Agni, the south-east; Yama the south; Nirṛti, the south-west; Varuṇa, the west; Vāyu, the north-west; Kubera, the North and Śiva, the north-east. The place where Agni sits on guard is known as tejovātī.

4) *Agni—One of the five elements.* The universe is believed to be composed of five elements of which Agni is one. The other four are Water, Earth, Ether and Air.

5) *The story of how Agni gave a Māyā Sītā (Phantom Sītā) to Śrī Rāma.* During their exile in the forests Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa were for some time living in an āśrama built on the shores of the ocean. One day Agni disguised as a Brāhmin approached them and said "O, Śrī Rāma, thou art born to kill the demon Rāvaṇa and save the world from his atrocities. Sītā is going to be a cause for that. Time is not far for you to finish this duty of yours. Rāvaṇa is soon to come and kidnap your wife, Sītā. You must, therefore, allow me to play a trick on Rāvaṇa. Entrust Sītā with me and I shall keep her safe. In her place here you can keep a Māyā Sītā (Phantom Sītā) which will be a live replica of your real wife. In the end when you take back Sītā after killing Rāvaṇa you will be compelled to throw your wife into the fire to test her chastity. At

*Manas=Mind. Putra=Son. Mānasa-putras are sons created from the mind of Brahmā, Śloka 10, Chapter 65, Ādi Parva, M.B.