

food is first thrown into the fire before given for eating. This story is part of Bhīṣma's oration to Dharmaputra on the origin of Śrāddha (The ceremony conducted on the anniversary of the death of a person by his son). (Chapter 92, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

22) *How Agni became a horse.* There was once a preceptor named Āveda. He got a disciple named Uttāṅga. One day Āveda left his āśrama for a distant place leaving his disciple in charge of the management of the āśrama. The preceptor was absent for a long time and his wife started making love to Uttāṅga. The dutiful disciple strongly objected to this. When Uttāṅga completed his course of study under Āveda he enquired what he should give to his preceptor. The preceptor directed him to his wife. The wife who bore a grudge against Uttāṅga resolved to tease him and said that he should go to King Pauṣya and beg of him the earrings worn by his wife. Uttāṅga started immediately and getting the earrings was coming back when on the way Takṣaka wrested the ornament from him and went and hid in the nether-world. Uttāṅga followed Takṣaka and there Agni in the form of a horse appeared before him and asked Uttāṅga what he wanted. He replied that he wanted to subdue all the serpents in the nether-world. Agni then advised him to blow thro' the nostrils of the horse. As he did so flames burst forth from all the openings of the horse making the nether-world hot and smoky. Takṣaka was frightened and he at once gave back the earrings to Uttāṅga. Uttāṅga was again worried for he had very little time to carry the earrings to the preceptor in time. Here again Agni helped him by carrying him swiftly on his back to the āśrama. When the preceptor and his wife found that Uttāṅga had carried out their wish they blessed him. (Chapter 3, Ādi Parva, M.B.).

23) *Agni becomes a messenger.* Once there arose a misunderstanding between Brhaspati and Saṁvarttaka, sons of Aṅgiras. Brhaspati went to devaloka as priest while the other remained in the world as a mad saint. At that time a King called Marutta invited Brhaspati to officiate as priest for a yajña of his. But Brhaspati refused to accept it. Nārada saw Marutta in despair and told him thus: "You go to Kāśī (Benares) and there at Puradvāra place a dead body and wait there. Saṁvarttaka, Brhaspati's brother will come and reprimand you. Without minding his scoldings follow him and request him to become the chief priest for your yāga. He will then ask you who advised you to do like this. Tell him that Nārada did so and if he asks where he could find Nārada do tell him that Nārada is hiding inside Agni". Hearing this Marutta went to Kāśī and did all as directed. Saṁvarttaka agreed to become the priest but wanted Marutta to bring some gold from Kailāsa before that. Marutta brought that also and the yajña started. Brhaspati when he came to know of all these developments became sorry for his refusal first and decided to become the priest of Marutta for his yāga. It was Agni who carried this message of consent to King Marutta. Thus Marutta's yajña was performed in a grand way. (Chapter 9, Āśvamedha Parva, M.B.).

24) *Agni takes back the Gāṇḍīva.* At the time of Khāṇḍava dahana (burning of Khāṇḍava forest) Agni gave Arjuna the famous Gāṇḍīva bow which Varuṇa had given him. After the great Mahābhārata battle Agni took back this bow from Arjuna. The Pāṇḍavas

at the fag end of their life started on a pilgrimage to the south with their consort Pāñcālī. Marching along slowly they reached the shores of Aruṇa Samudra (Aruṇa Ocean). Arjuna had with him then the Gāṇḍīva and also the arrow-case which never becomes empty. When they reached the shores of the ocean Agni blocked their way standing before them in the form of a huge mountain and said, "O Arjuna I am god Agni. It was I who gave this famous Gāṇḍīva bow to you. The bow belongs to Varuṇa. So please throw it into the ocean and proceed on your way". On hearing this Arjuna threw both the bow and the arrow-case into the ocean and continued the march. (Śloka 33 to 43, Chapter 1, Mahāprasthānika Parva, M.B.).

25) *Additional information about Agni, the God of fire.*

1) Svāhādevī, wife of Agni, gave birth to three sons, named Dākṣiṇam, Gārhapatyam and Āhavanīyam. (Chapter 9, Devī Bhāgavata).

2) Agni, the God of fire, got three sons by his wife Svāhādevī named Pāvaka, Pavamāna and Śuci. These three sons had all together fortyfive sons. These forty-five grandsons, three sons and Agni himself constitute the fortynine Fires mentioned in the purāṇas (Aṅgirasaiḥ).

3) Nīla, the monkey, is born of Agni. (Sarga 41, Chapter Kiṣkindhā, Rāmāyaṇa).

4) Dhṛṣṭadyumna, the great archer, was born of Agni. (Śloka 126, Chapter 67, Ādi Parva, M.B.).

5) Subrahmaṇya was born as the son of Agni. (Chapter 225, Vana Parva, M.B.).

6) Agni, the God of fire, loved all prajāpatis like his sons. (Chapter 85, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

7) The sage, Bhṛgu, was born from Agni. (Śloka 8, Chapter 5, Ādi Parva, M.B.).

8) All Devatās are Agni himself. (Śloka 109, Chapter 85, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

9) God Agni loved God Skanda more than anybody else. (Chapter 226, Vana Parva, M.B.).

10) At the time when Śrī Rāma after killing Rāvaṇa was putting Sītā to a purity test by throwing her into the fire, Agni witnessed that Sītā had done no wrong and was pure and chaste as before. (Śloka 28, Chapter 201, Vana Parva, M.B.).

11) In the beginning Brahmā created the universe. There was no death then and the Earth became overcrowded. Brahmā got worried and he sent fire from his body to burn all beings. The world was on the verge of extinction when Lord Śiva intervened and requested Brahmā to withdraw Agni and create the god of Death. (Chapter 52, Droṇa Parva, M.B.).

12) Agni is one of the Aṣṭa Vasūs which are eight in number. The others are : Āpa, Dhruva, Soma, Dharma, Anila, Pratyūṣa and Prabhāsa. (Chapter 15, Viṣṇu Purāṇa).

13) Śuci, son of Agni, born of Svāhādevī is Baḍavāgni himself. (Chapter 20, Agni Purāṇa).

14) The God, Agni, uses a spear as his weapon and the vehicle he uses is a goat. (Chapter 51, Agni Purāṇa).

15) The sage, Agastya, converted the Viṣṇu idol at the Kuttālam temple into one of Śiva and when people around started an agitation Agastya sent forth flames of fire through his eyes. (Asura Kāṇḍa of Skānda Purāṇa).

16) Agni was born to Purūravas as a son named Jāta-vedas. (Chapter 14, Navama Skandha of Bhāgavata).