

always weighed more and at last the Emperor said he would weigh himself against the dove. As the weak and fleshless Emperor was about to get into the pan of the scale Agni and Indra emerged from the bodies of the dove and hawk and appeared before the Emperor. They blessed him and immediately took him to heaven. (Chapter 131, Vana Parva, M.B.).

10) *Agni and the testicles of a goat.* The occasion is when sage Viśvāmitra is taking Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa to the forests to give protection to the sages against the demons. They reached the place where Ahalyā lay as a stone cursed by Gautama. Viśvāmitra told them the story: "It was here that the great sage, Gautama, lived with his beautiful consort, Ahalyā. Once Indra had an intercourse with her privately and Gautama coming to know of the misdeed cursed her and turned her into stone. By the curse of the same sage Indra lost his testicles. Greatly aggrieved by this loss Indra prayed to god Agni for help and on the advice of Agni the devas removed the deformity by placing a goat's testicles instead." (Śloka 48 & 49, Bāla Kāṇḍa, Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa).

11) *How sage Bhṛgu cursed Agni.* Sage Bhṛgu was living with his wife Pulomā in his āśrama. Pulomā became pregnant. One day when Bhṛgu wanted to go out for a bath in the river he asked Agni to keep a watch over his pregnant wife. There was a demon by name Puloma who was once in love with Pulomā. On this particular day Puloma entered the āśrama to see his former love. When he entered the āśrama Puloma saw Agni there burning with a brilliant flame in the fire-pit. Puloma said: "O God of fire, if I ask you a question you must give me an impartial reply. I was in love with this Pulomā and I had accepted her as my wife spiritually. But, then, her father gave her to Bhṛgu. Who, then, is the true owner of Pulomā?" Agni was afraid of Bhṛgu. Yet he explained the position honestly. "It is true that Pulomā has married Bhṛgu. But he has not married her according to Hindu rites." Hearing this the demon changed himself into the shape of a swine and carried away Pulomā. On the way Pulomā delivered a male babe and it fell on the ground. The boy was named Cyavana. It was this boy that became later on the famous Cyavana Maharṣi. Even at birth the boy was brilliant as the Sun to look at and Puloma, the demon, noticing the unusual brilliance of the child left the mother and child on the way and fled frightened. Pulomā returned to the āśrama carrying the child weeping profusely all the way and creating a lachrymal river called Vadhū-saras. As soon as she entered the āśrama the angry sage asked "Who told Puloma that you are my wife?" Pulomā then told her husband all that happened there and Bhṛgu called Agni and cursed him thus: "May you be a consumer of all things on this Earth". Greatly aggrieved Agni went away and hid himself. The absence of Agni created chaos in all the three worlds; Heaven, Earth and the Nether-world. A deputation of all the afflicted people waited upon Brahmā and

Brahmā modified the curse and declared that all that Agni touched would become pure. Agni was consoled and he started his work as usual.

12) *How Agni cursed frogs, birds and elephants.* Many important events took place while Agni was underground cursed by Bhṛgu. It was during that time that Pārvatī cursed all the Devas and the Devas were defeated by the asuras (demons). The necessity of a warrior capable of defeating the asuras arose then. The idea of creating Lord Subrahmanya came up and Brahmā said that only Agni could help them in this matter since Agni was the only one who escaped from the curse of Pārvatī, being underground at the time of the curse. The Devas started a vigilant search but Agni was not to be found. Agni was then hiding inside the ocean. The ocean was getting hot and the animals living there found their life unbearable. Frogs went to the devas and told them where Agni was hiding. Enraged at this Agni cursed the frogs saying that they would never be able to find the taste of anything. Frogs went weeping to the devas who in turn blessed the frogs saying that they would acquire the ability to move about easily in any darkness. Agni changed his place of hiding and went and hid in a big banyan tree. An elephant going by that way found him out and informed the devas; knowing this Agni cursed the elephants saying that its tongue would go deep inside. But the devas blessed the elephants saying that the position of the tongue would never be a hindrance to free eating and that elephants would be able to eat anything and everything. Agni left the banyan tree and hid himself in the hollow of a Śamī tree. A little bird living in that tree gave information to the devas and the devas found him out before he got time to leave the place. Agni cursed the bird saying that its tongue would always be curved inside and the devas blessed it saying that the curvature would help it to sing beautiful songs. Since Agni was found out from Śamī tree this tree became sacred. Since this finding out of Agni after a long absence is like a re-birth of Agni the Purāṇas mention that Agni was born from the Śamī tree. The Devas then requested Agni to help them to create a son capable of conquering the demons.* (Chapter 85, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

13) *Birth of Subrahmanya.* At that time Varuṇa performed a yāga. All the dikpālakas (zone guardians of the universe) including Śiva participated in the yāga. Seeing the beautiful wives of the sages Śiva had emission. Taking the semen in his hand he put it into the fire. Agni carried it to Gaṅgā and requested her to take it for conception. Though she at first refused she took it, became pregnant and finally delivered a male child whom she threw into the forest Śaravaṇa. It was this child who became known as Kārttikeya or Subrahmanya later on. (Chapter 85, Anuśāsana Parva, M.B.).

14) *How Agni blessed Nala.* While Nala was going to the wedding of Damayantī Indra, Agni, Varuṇa and Kāla accosted him on his way and asked him to go as a messenger of theirs and advise Damayantī to marry one

*Kathāsaritśāgara gives another version of why Agni went and hid himself under the ocean. When Kāma, the God of Love, was burnt to death by Śiva, Pārvatī, Śiva's wife, did not find a way to get a child for her from her husband. At last Brahmā approached Śiva and told him that the absence of Kāma was making creation difficult. Śiva then declared that thereafter Kāma would find a place in the minds of all living beings including himself. Pārvatī and Śiva immediately commenced a sexual life which went on incessantly for a hundred years without reaching the climax. The world was agitated and the universe stood on the verge of ruin. The Devas decided to send Agni to intervene. But Agni was afraid of Śiva and so went and hid himself under the ocean. (Chapter 6, Lāvṇyakalambaka of Kathāsaritśāgara).