

Mahābhārata, Karna Parva, Chapter 56, Verse 45, mentions that he was slain by Karna during the Bhārata battle.

ŚUKRA (ŚUKRĀCĀRYA) I. Preceptor of the Asuras.

1) *Birth.* Views differ as to whether Śukra was the son or grandson of Bhṛgu. The Purāṇas state that Pulomā was the wife of Bhṛgu. Śukra has another name, Kāvya. Kāvya means the son of Kavi. Some authorities say that Kavi was Bhṛgu's son, while others think that Kavi was Bhṛgu himself. Śukra's mother is referred to as "Kāvyamātā" in many places. Śukra is referred to as the strongest of the seven sons born to Bhṛgu and Pulomā. In the light of these references it is reasonable to consider Śukra as the son of the sage Bhṛgu. "Kavi" must be supposed to be another name of Bhṛgu. Uśanas was another name for Śukra.

2) *Love story.* Once the sage Bhṛgu lived in the valley of Mandara mountain, performing austere tapas. Śukra who was then a boy, used to attend on his father. One day when Bhṛgu was absorbed in "Nirvikalpasamādhi" (deep meditation) the lonely Śukra was appreciating the beauty of the sky above him. There was no one else by his side. At that time he happened to see an exceptionally beautiful Apsarā woman passing across the sky. His heart was filled with delight at the sight. All his thoughts were centred on her and he sat absorbed in her bewitching charm. In his imagination he followed Indra and reached Indraloka. Indra greeted him with honour. After that Śukra, attended by the heavenly beings went about sight-seeing in Heaven. There he unexpectedly came across the Apsarā beauty whom he had seen earlier, in the midst of several other women. They fell in love at first sight. To fulfil his desire Śukra enveloped the whole place in darkness. The other women left the place. The apsarā beauty approached Śukra and both of them entered a hut formed by the thick foliage of creeping plants and indulged in sensual pleasures. Since Śukra spent a period of eight Caturyugas like this in her company, he became weak in his virtue and descended to the earth. Then he became conscious of his physical being. His depraved soul was stopped at the moon. It reached the earth through mist and grew up as paddy plants. A Brāhmaṇa who was a native of Daśārṇa land ate the rice which was cooked from the ears of those paddy plants. Śukra's soul in the shape of Śukra entered the womb of the Brāhmaṇa's wife and in due course took his birth. Because of his close association with Munis, that boy grew up like a sage and spent a period of one Manvantara, leading an austere life in the valley of the Meru mountain. At that time his Apsarā woman had been born as a female deer, as the result of a curse. By their connection in the previous birth, the Brāhmaṇa fell in love with that female deer and begot a human child by his union with her. With that the austerities of his life were at an end. All his thoughts were now directed towards the future glory of his son and he ignored even his spiritual duties. Not long after, he died of snake bite. Later, he was born as the son of the king of Madra and ruled the country for many years. After that he took birth in many other wombs and at last was born as the son of a Mahārṣi living on the bank of the river Gaṅgā. Śukra's body which was by the side of Bhṛgu dropped to the earth after being exposed to the wind and sun for a long time. But owing to Bhṛgu's

power of tapas and the holiness of the āśrama, birds and animals did not eat the body. After 1,000 divyavatsaras, sage Bhṛgu opened his eyes from his samādhi but he did not find his son near him. A famished and worn out body was lying before him. Within the wrinkles of the skin, small birds were nesting and frogs took refuge in the hollow of the stomach. Enraged at the premature death of his son, he was about to curse Yama, the god of Death. Coming to know of this Dharmarāja (Yama) appeared before him and said :— "We honour and adore you as a great tapasvī. You should not ruin your tapas. I have devoured numerous Brahmāṇḍas. I have already swallowed Rudras and Viṣṇudevas many times. All of you are my food. It is ordained by Fate. Even Brahmā is not indestructible at the end of a Kalpa. Knowing all these facts, why do you think of cursing me? Your son fell into this state because of his own act. While you were in a state of Samādhi your son's mind left its body and went up to Heaven. There he spent many years indulging in sensual pleasures in the company of the celestial beauty Viśvācī. Then he was born as a Brāhmaṇa in Daśārṇa country. In his next birth he became the King of Kosala. After that passing through many births in succession he is now performing tapas on the bank of the river Samaṅgā as the son of a Brāhmaṇa, under the name, Vāsudeva. Open your inner eye and see for yourself."

After saying this Dharmarāja revived the body of Śukra who rose up and did obeisance to his father. (Jñānavāsiṣṭha, Sthitiprakaraṇam).

(3) *Domestic Life.* It is seen that Śukra had several wives and children. In Devī Bhāgavata there is a story of Jayantī, daughter of Indra who was Śukra's wife for about ten years. (See under Jayantī II). Priyavrata, the brother of Uttānapāda had a daughter named Ūrjjasvatī by his wife Surūpā. In Devī Bhāgavata, 8th Skandha it is stated that Śukrācārya married Ūrjjasvatī and he had a daughter Devayānī by her. Mahābhārata, Ādi Parva, Chapter 65 mentions that Śukra was the ācārya (preceptor) of the Asuras and his four sons were the priests of the Asuras. Śukra had a daughter named "Arā". (See under Arā). Besides, Śukra had another wife named Śataparvā.

But no child was born to Śataparvā.

Devī, wife of Varuṇa's elder brother, was a daughter of Śukra. Ūrjjasvatī was the most famous among Śukra's wives.

4) *Revived his mother.* See under Kāvyamātā.

5) *Jamadagni was restored to life.* See the 8th para under Jamadagni.

6) *Śukra cursed Daṇḍa.* See under Arā.

7) *Cursed Yayāti.* See the 4th Para under Devayānī.

8) *How Śukra lost his eye.* Śukrācārya lost one of his eyes during the time of Mahābali, the Asura King. Mahāviṣṇu incarnated as Vāmana and begged three feet of earth from Mahābali. Since Śukra tried to obstruct it, Viṣṇu put out one of Śukra's eyes with the point of a darbha grass. (For more details see 3rd Para under Mahābali).

9) *Śiva swallowed Śukra.* Once Śukra invaded Kubera and plundered all his wealth. The distressed Kubera informed Śiva about it. Śiva at once started up with his weapon, shouting "Where is he?" Śukra appeared on the top of Śiva's trident. Śiva caught hold of him and swallowed him. Śukra who moved about in Śiva's