

Skanda

- Skanda is the second son of Shiva and Uma (Parvati).
- He is also known as Kartikeya, Murugan, Subramania, Guha and Shanmukha (one who has six faces).
- Skanda is sometimes added to the list of five important deities worshipped by the Smarta community, making him a sixth focus of worship.
- He is depicted with six heads, and usually either two or twelve arms.
- Skanda is the commander-in-chief of the demigods and is often referred to as 'the God of war'. He is considered the ultimate warrior. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, "Of generals I am Kartikeya". (B.Gita, 10.24)
- He is also considered the embodiment of jnana (knowledge)
- Skanda is always depicted as a youth (kumara), full of optimism and vigour
- Skanda's weapon is the vel (spear), which can confer moksha on the devotee.
- The six-pointed star (like the Star of David) is a symbol widely associated with Skanda and he is often shown wearing a pendant of this shape.
- His carrier is the peacock, and his military emblem the cock.
- Skanda is often regarded as having two consorts, who can confer upon his devotees the boons of earthly happiness and heavenly bliss. They are usually considered to be called Valli and Teyvanai. However, in Bengali and Orissa devotees consider him a lifelong brahmachari (celibate bachelor).
- Worship of Skanda is most popular in South India, and especially in Tamil Nadu, where he is usually called Murugan.
- There are six principal holy abodes (literally 'battle camps) dedicated to Murugan, of which the most famous is possibly Tiruchendur. About half a million pilgrims flock there on the main festival day.
- The main festival is called Skanda Sashti (literally; "the six day festival") and occurs shortly after Diwali.
- Within Shri Lanka there is an especially important holy place called Kataragama
 - Perhaps the most famous story connected with Skanda concerns his birth. He was born to help the demigods defeat a demon called Surapadma. He was named Kartikeya because he was brought up by the Kritikas, the respective wives of six of the seven great rishis (sages). These six sisters were later cursed to become the six stars of the Pleiades.
- Further references: Teachers' Book: pages 50, 137
CD Rom: STO-319, PIC-051(g), TGD-04
http://www.hindunet.org/god/Gods/kartikeya_subramania/