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■The Curse on Agni, the God of Fire■

There was a sage by name Bhrigu. Bhrigu was created by the Creator Brahma from the fire during a sacrificial rite performed by Varuna, the God of rain. Thus Bhrigu is to be considered the son of Brahma, the Creator.



Bhrigu married Puloma. Puloma became pregnant after some time. One day Bhrigu left her alone in his hermit and went to the river to perform ablutions. At that time, a Rakshasa (demon) entered Bhrigu's house.

Puloma entertained him offering him fruit and snacks, taking him for a guest. (It was a practice in ancient India to offer food to anyone, including a stranger, who visits one's house.

In fact, feeding at least one stranger before the people in the house took their food was even considered an obligation.) The rakshasa was attracted by Puloma's beauty and was instantly consumed by intense lust.

The demon saw the sacrificial fire (Agni) that was earlier lit by Bhrigu, the fire that was still burning.

He asked Agni, "This woman's father had betrothed her to me and I had also accepted her as my wife. (When Puloma, as a child, was committing

small acts of mischief, her father had threatened her that he would hand her over to a demon, as parents generally do. This demon was trying to literally interpret this as Puloma having been offered to him by her father!). But she was subsequently appropriated by Sage Bhrigu.

Tell me whom she rightly belongs to - to me or to Bhrigu."

Agni was scared to speak the truth, fearing that doing so would infuriate the demon, and said, "It's true that Puloma's father offered her to you first.

But this was not done in a formal way through performing the necessary rituals. But she was married to Sage Brighu with Vedic rites properly performed in my presence."

Discarding Agni's equivocal reply, the demon took the form of a boar, carried Puloma and flew fast like the wind.

Upset by this violent movement, the child in Puloma's womb fell down on the earth. The child was (later) named Chyavana (meaning 'born premature.')

Stunned by the sight of the child falling down, the demon let Puloma out of his grip and fell down.

He got instantly immolated and was turned into ashes.

Puloma picked up her child Chyavana from the earth and walked away, sobbing uncontrollably. Her tears followed her like a stream of water.

Seeing this sight, her grandfather Brahma named this river Vadhusara ('one that follows the bride', the bride being Puloma, daughter in law of Brahma).

Bhrigu saw his wife carrying the baby and crying uncontrollably. He ascertained from her what had happened.

He was enraged by the behavior of Agni and cursed him, "You will eat everything."

Agni was outraged by this curse. He protested to Brighu that as an impartial witness, he only spoke the truth. To show his protest, Agni withdrew from all places ranging from the sites of the

daily homa (a fire ritual) of the brahmins to the places of sacrificial rites of sages.

Since food & other contributions were being offered to the gods & deceased forefathers through the medium of Agni, his refusal to appear affected every one. Sages went to Brahma & prayed to him.

Brahma pacified Agni by saying that he would turn Bhrigu's curse positive. As a consequence of Bhrigu's curse, Agni would consume everything without any discrimination and would make things pure in the process.

Brahma also granted him a boon that in sacrificial rituals, a share of the offerings made to the gods would also be given to Agni.

Mollified by Brahma's words, Agni started performing his role of receiving the offerings on behalf of the gods and the deceased souls and

delivering the offerings to them, while also getting his own share in the process.

■Agni Gayatri Mantra / ■■■■■■ ■■■■■■■■ ■■■■■■■■

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Meaning : Om, Let me meditate on the great flame, Oh, God of fire, grant me with higher intellect, Oh, let the radiant God of Fire illuminate my mind.

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