

STORY-TIME

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a collection of
ancient stories
for modern times

Brahma Kumaris Ishwara Vidyalyaya
Mount Abu, Rajasthan, India

Contents

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Researched and developed
by B.K. Shantiru

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Preface

Stories derived from scriptures, mythology, folklore and legend have always been a vital part of human development. These stories are transmitted from generation to generation through religious rites, the arts, drama, festivals, dance, poetry and, perhaps most importantly, by parents and grandparents in the extended family setting. Stories provide entertainment and information on how our lives should be lived. They offer guidelines for fulfilling social, moral and spiritual values. Even God teaches truth by drawing comparisons with the scriptures and other stories. In reality story-telling reflects processes happening within the individual and society. God's story explores the relationship between the mind, intellect and subconscious and their intimate connection with the Almighty. This book will be of interest to those who wish to understand the ancient stories of India which Baba quite often refers to in the murlis. A deeper understanding of their symbolism will enhance our spiritual wisdom. What is given here is only a gist of the essence of some of the stories. There are many other versions of the stories written by various authors.

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AJAMIL

The Supreme Soul always mentions that one should not become a sinner like Ajamil. A 'sinner' means one who is influenced by the vices, such as lust, attachment, anger, ego and greed. Ajamil symbolises the vices because he had so many of them. When there is the influence of one vice, it is usually accompanied by another. Prior to becoming such a sinner, Ajamil was a pious Brahmin who worshipped God daily. He was very regular in his duties, frequently observing fasts and penances. He was a praiseworthy man and a great devotee of Lord Narayan. He worked as a businessman and his youngest son was Narayan.

One day Ajamil went to the forest. There he met a beautiful woman, fell in love with her and ultimately married her. From that day onward, being very attached to his wife, he neglected his worship and prayer. Eight sons were born to him. He had now become an ordinary man.

At the time of his death the messengers of Yama appeared to him. Frightened, he cried aloud, calling to his youngest son, Narayan, to come and help him. While calling out to Narayan, he realised how pure the boy was in comparison to himself. He began to reflect on the many sins he had committed and thought, "I must ask for God's forgiveness." He then kept asking God to forgive him. By continually calling out for God's forgiveness he was able at the last moment to link himself with God. Because of this last-minute link, he became pure and attained liberation.

The story tells us that one should not become a sinner like Ajamil. However, if one has made a mistake, one should ask for forgiveness from God and not keep repeating it. Because Ajamil kept calling out to Narayan, his eye of knowledge opened. The Supreme Soul always says that, by

understanding the godly knowledge imparted by Him, even sinners like Ajamil are able to attain liberation and liberation in life. If one is able to attain liberation by having a last-minute link with God, how much greater will be the reward of one who remembers the Supreme Soul with faith and devotion over a long period of time.

ASHTAVAKRA AND KING JANAK

Detachment is one of the qualities developed in the art of meditation. It is only possible to be detached if one practises soul-consciousness. In the following story, taken from the Mahabharata, we are shown how one is able to conquer attachment in life. In this story Ashtavakra proves that neither size nor age are indications of one's knowledge.

King Janak of Videha was a king well-known for his knowledge, charity and sanctity. He lived in a splendid palace but wished to live the life of a renunciate. He wanted to live in the world but remain detached from it. He made it known that he would listen to anyone in his kingdom who could tell him the method of receiving liberation in life (jeevanmukti) within a second. All the Brahmins and scholars from far and wide came to visit him and gave very learned discourses and scholarly lectures but no one was able to fulfil the king's request. He was disappointed and thought of giving up the whole idea, for the scholars had not given any concrete solutions to his problem.

While he was considering his best option, a short, ugly man entered the palace courtyard. Almost crawling along the ground, he moved slowly to where the sages were sitting. All of them laughed scornfully, on seeing this unwanted visitor with his deformed body. His body was bent and twisted in eight different places and that was why he was called 'Ashtavakra' - a person with eight deformities. Ashtavakra, also known as Ashtamukan, was the son of Kahoda and Sujata. Kahoda was a good disciple and so his guru offered his own daughter, Sujata, to him in marriage. After some days Sujata conceived a child and, while this child was still an embryo in the womb, he pointed out some faults his father had made while reciting the Vedas. Extremely annoyed, Kahoda cursed the child in the womb to ensure that it would be deformed at birth.

At the king's palace the discussions were still in progress, open to all. Having listened to all the sages and scholars, the king had announced that anyone else who thought he might have the correct answer to the problem and who could satisfy his thirst for knowledge was welcome to speak. He then asked Ashtavakra whether he had anything to contribute. "Yes", said Ashtavakra. "But, Your Majesty, before I reveal to Your Highness the words of God's wisdom, I must say something about this gathering. I hope that none of you will be angered by my frankness. I must say that this is not a gathering of royal sages but one of dealers-in-skin! I must call a spade a spade!" The sages looked a little tense. Some of them grinned, others were seen grinding their teeth, and others again were gnawing their fingers or nibbling at their nails. In contrast, the king sat calm and composed, listening attentively and patiently.

Continuing on, Ashtavakra said, "Forgive me for my rudeness, your Royal Highness! Royal Sages, I respect you all for your learning and wisdom but may I ask you why you all laughed so scornfully, when you saw me entering the courtyard? Wasn't it because of my crawling and the deformity of my body? I am sure it was my ugly body with its bends and twists that made you mock me. Doesn't this then speak rather eloquently of your body-consciousness?" They now all appeared to be realising their mistake but the expressions of scorn had not yet disappeared totally from their faces.

The ugly man continued, "Am I wrong to point out that soul-consciousness is the means for spiritual progress and enlightenment? Therefore, if anyone looks at the body, without seeing the soul, and instead of feeling sorry for another's fate, hatefully laughs at his condition, would you call him a sage? No. He looks only at the outer flesh, the skin, and therefore, I would have to call him a dealer-in-skin."

At that moment King Janak decided to mount his horse and leave the court. He had one foot on the stirrup and the other foot on the ground when Ashtavakra asked him, "Oh King, where are you?" King Janak replied, "On the horse and on the ground but not fully on either." Ashtavakra said, "What you are now saying is brahma gyan, the knowledge of jeevanmukti. The conqueror of attachment will be in the world but not of the world. While living in the world, the soul will be mentally detached." On hearing this, King Janak achieved enlightenment and became even more respected than the many famous sages around him.

BHASMASUR

Meditation is one method through which we can attain divine powers from God. However, attaining the divine powers is just one aspect; how to use the powers is quite another. The Supreme Soul reminds us firstly, to make our intellect divine and then, whatever attainments we achieve, will be used for a beneficial and selfless purpose. If we mix selfishness with our godly attainments, their strength will eventually diminish. The following story illustrates this very effectively.

Once there was a demon called Bhasmasur. 'Bhasm' means 'ash' and 'asur' means 'devil'. Even though he was famous for his devilish nature, he did intense meditation (tapasya) in order to receive a boon from Shiva. God Shiva was pleased with his meditation and asked him what he wanted. The demon was very happy and asked for a blessing from God Shiva. He wanted a person to turn into ashes if he put his hands on that person's head.

The demon's mind was filled with devilish ideas. He wanted to marry Parvati, the wife of Shankar (Shiva). Vishnu came to Shiva's rescue by incarnating in the form of a beautiful woman and appearing in front of Bhasmasur. The woman (Vishnu) persuaded him to dance with her and showed him some steps that involved putting his hand on his own head. He followed her lead and thus burnt himself to ashes. In this way Vishnu helped Shiva revoke the boon by making Bhasmasur use it against himself.

The significance of this story is that you must use blessings accurately. Otherwise they become a curse. Baba says that a blessing will only bear fruit if no ego is involved.

CHURNING THE OCEAN

In Hindu mythology it is believed that one of Vishnu's incarnations is that of a tortoise, Kurma. Perhaps it was actually a turtle because it lived in the sea but it was always said to be a tortoise. 'Kurma' can mean 'deed' or 'act', that is, 'the act of creation'. It is believed that many treasures from the golden and silver ages were lost. According to the myth, Vishnu descended to earth as a tortoise to help recover these lost treasures. It is also believed that in those days the ocean was made of milk.

Gods and demons together set about churning the ocean of milk, using Mount Mandara as a churning stick. Such was the weight of Mount Mandara that the operation would have been impossible if Kurma had not lent his curved back as a pivot on which to rest it while Vishnu shouldered most of the weight. The gods and demons divided into two teams. With the help of the potent herbs, which they had thrown into the ocean, and using the serpent, Vasuki, as a churning rope, they proceeded with the task of churning. In due course all the precious objects rose up out of the milky ocean.

The ocean gave forth the following:

Amrit, ambrosia, that is, the nectar of immortality which is reserved for the gods;

Dhanvantari, the physician of the gods, the second most precious thing in life after immortality;

Lakshmi, the goddess of beauty and good fortune who was to become Vishnu's wife;

Sura, the goddess of wine;

Chandra, the moon, which Shiva took;

The nymph, **Rambha**, the most beautiful apsaras;

A beautiful white horse called **Ucchaishrava**, which was given to the demon, Bali, but seized by Indra;

Kaustubha, Vishnu's chest-jewel, a sort of brooch, which is worn by Indian men as an amulet and which originally had the magic powers of healing and protecting its wearer;

The miraculous, celestial wishing-tree, **Parijata**, which grows in heaven;

The cow of plenty called **Kamdhenu** or **Surabhi** which could feed multitudes with her milk. This was given to the seven rishis;

Airavata, a wonderful white elephant, which became Indra's mount after he stopped riding a horse;

Shankh, a large conch shell which guaranteed victory to the warrior who blew it during a battle;

Dhanush, a mighty bow with an arrow that always hit and killed its target;

Halahal Visha, the poison vomited out by the serpent, which Shiva nearly swallowed. This was the last treasure to come out of the ocean.

The fourteen treasures, which rose to the surface of the ocean of milk when the gods churned it, were all very special. Some of the treasures were used to save the lives of whole nations in times of crisis. However, some treasures were also at times the cause of wars, as the demons coveted these possessions of the gods.

Let us see what the spiritual significance of this myth is and how it applies to our daily life. This story tells us the importance of knowledge at the transition period of the cycle, that is, the period between the old world, the iron age, and the new world, the golden age. At present in the confluence age there is a struggle going on in our minds. It is during this period of darkness that the Supreme Soul, the Ocean of Knowledge, comes and imparts godly knowledge to humankind. It is by churning the godly knowledge that one is able to experience happiness and remove all sorrow.

The knowledge bestowed by God is the ocean. Mount Mandara signifies the mind. The serpent, Vasuki, which works as a rope moving the mind in either direction, signifies the intellect. In order to churn the deep and infinite ocean of knowledge, one's mind has to be stable and unshakeable like the mountain. One has to face storms, tests and obstacles in spiritual life. One's power of discrimination, developed in the intellect, has to be kept sublime and powerful. One also has to make the mind and intellect work together, contemplate deeply on various dimensions of knowledge and assimilate it. This is similar to separating the cream from the milk.

The deities and the devils are engaged in churning the ocean. The devils, asuras, represent the vices, namely, lust, anger, attachment, greed and ego. The deities, devatas, represent purity, peace, contentment, detachment, love and truth. The significance is that, when we churn, our intellect is constantly pulled in opposite directions by either good thoughts, represented by the deities, or bad thoughts, represented by the devils.

In the story the tortoise, Kurma, illustrates the process of turning within, just as a tortoise withdraws into its own shell after having done its job. By stabilising oneself in this state of mind, one is able to extract nectar, the essence of knowledge. The poison that emerges from the ocean signifies that, by becoming introverted and continuously churning the godly knowledge, all old tendencies and viciousness in the form of vices are purged.

In order to destroy the poison it is said that God Shiva, Bholanath, the Lord of Innocence, comes to help remove the poison by drinking it, to prevent it from afflicting many souls. This signifies that God has come to remove sorrow from the world by giving knowledge to humankind.

The spiritual significance of the treasures that emerged from the churning is:

- (i) through the nectar of knowledge one is able to conquer death, to become immortal in the new world;
- (ii) **Dhanvantari**, the physician, stands for health or healing. Churning the knowledge continuously means thinking about pure and positive thoughts. So, through this, one is able to acquire complete health, wealth and happiness;
- (iii) **Lakshmi** signifies that one is able to acquire wealth and deity status;

- (iv) **Chandra**, the moon, means that one is able to acquire coolness and tranquillity of mind, like the moon, and become sixteen celestial degrees complete like the full moon;
- (v) **Ucchaishrava**, the white horse, is the most noble of horses. This signifies listening to noble thoughts and sentiments and inculcating them in oneself;
- (vi) **Parijata**, the wishing-tree, signifies understanding knowledge of the kalpa tree and the world;
- (vii) **Kaustubha**, the jewel, signifies the firmness and stability of mind needed by the intellect to enable the soul to inculcate virtues, often referred to in the murli as jewels;
- (viii) **Airavat**, the white elephant, symbolises the sovereignty of deities in heaven, Indraprasth;
- (ix) **Kamdhenu or Surabhi**, the cow, means acquiring all that one desires. Knowledge is the means by which to achieve complete happiness;
- (x) The nymph, **Rambha**, signifies that those who churn true knowledge become God's messengers, angels, fairies or nymphs;
- (xi) **Sura**, goddess of wine, represents spiritual intoxication. One who churns the knowledge enjoys spiritual experiences;
- (xii) **Shankh**, the conch shell, means that those who churn the godly knowledge can serve through their pure speech;
- (xiii) **Dhanush**, the mighty bow, signifies that those who churn the knowledge can stimulate self-realisation in others as surely as an arrow hits its target;
- (xiv) **Halahal Visha**, meaning 'poison', 'power' or 'medicine'. This was the poison, vomited out by the serpent, which God Shiva removed by swallowing it into his throat. (This is why Shankar's throat is depicted in pictures as discoloured.) This signifies God's coming to free the world from sorrow by giving knowledge and removing us from the poison of the five vices.

DADHICHI RISHI

This is a story of a rishi who is called Dadhichi and of his renunciation and dedication. The rishi had a lot of love for God, donating everything to Him. In one version of the story he allowed himself to be eaten by a lion, piece by piece, in order to save a cow. His entire body was eaten with the exception of his bones. Then God blessed him with life once again. This shows how one can be rewarded for true dedication and sacrifice of one's life in order to benefit others. When we renounce our life or sacrifice something for a good cause, we don't lose anything but actually gain. God Shiva blesses us with a new spiritual birth in the Brahmin clan and with a future reward of health, wealth and happiness in heaven, if we are able to sacrifice ourselves in godly service like Dadhichi Rishi.

Another version of the story is that there was a battle between the devils and the deities. When the deities went to the rishi for help, he sacrificed himself until only his bones were left. The deities used the rishi's bones as weapons and defeated the devils.

The spiritual significance of this story is that Maya confronts us in a frightening form. However, if we maintain courage and bravery, we can conquer Maya. We have to work hard and dedicate ourselves in the service of God. We receive the fruit of whatever we give. Dadhichi Rishi was such a dedicated person that he allowed his very bones to be donated and used in service. Even though he was still alive, he sat in meditation and willed his soul to leave the body and donated his bones with happiness. This means that we have to use our bodies in godly service as a trustee. If we do this, we will be able to create a new world where no vices exist. Brahmins are Raj Rishis, meaning rishis who have royalty and purity.

THE DONKEY

Once upon a time there was a salt merchant who had a very lazy donkey. Every day he would drive it, loaded with a bag full of salt, to the nearest town and then drive it back home again. To get to the town they had to cross a river. One day the donkey slipped into the water. When it stood up again, it immediately felt that the load was a lot lighter. The donkey was very happy indeed! The next day and the day after, the donkey purposely fell down into the water again, so its master decided to teach it a lesson.

On the next trip he loaded the donkey with a bag full of sponge. The donkey duly repeated its trick, falling once again into the water. Unfortunately, this time when it tried to stand up, the load was very heavy. The salt merchant beat the donkey again and again until it was finally standing and in great pain, the donkey slowly limped along.

This story signifies that we should not be lazy in making spiritual effort. Sometimes, after being made clean, donkeys also roll in the mud and dirty themselves. Baba has said that we should not dirty ourselves by coming into body-consciousness. Otherwise we will lose all our decorations, that is, all attainments, virtues and powers.

DRAUPADI

Draupadi was the wife of the five Pandavas and the daughter of King Drupada of Panchala. She was considered a pure child because she was born out of a sacrificial fire. Draupadi was a woman of great beauty and a determined spirit. She actively participated in the war which started over her, and incited her husbands to take revenge.

One day King Drupada challenged all the kings in the world who wanted to marry his daughter to participate in an archery contest. The contest was set up according to the following description. In a pool stood a pillar, on top of which a beam was balanced. Each contestant had to straddle the beam with a foot placed at each end, keeping the beam balanced on the pillar at the same time as he kept his own body balanced on the beam. Suspended above the pillar was a fish, spinning rapidly on a wheel. While focusing attention on the reflection of the fish in the water, the contestant had to aim for and hit the eye of the rapidly-spinning fish, suspended above him. The one who succeeded in the contest would marry Draupadi.

The Pandavas attended the great assembly of hundreds of princes from near and far, including Duryodhana. One after the other the princes came forward, and one after the other they failed. Then Karna, the king of Anga, stepped forward and seemed destined to win the contest. Draupadi, however, intervened, saying that she would never marry the son of a charioteer. Unfortunately, Karna did not know at that time that he was really the son of Surya, the sun-god. (Refer to the story of Karna.)

Arjuna, one of the Pandavas, who had powerful concentration, stood on the balance, looked at the reflection of the fish and shot the eye of the

fish above with his arrow. King Drupada then had to fulfil his promise and so Arjuna married Draupadi. He then returned to his mother in the forest and announced to her that he had won a great prize. Their mother, Kunti, who had always taught them the value of unity, said that the gift should be shared among all five brothers. Arjuna's mother said, "Whatever you have brought with you is not just for you. You all have a right to share that gift." Because of his obedience and respect for his mother, Arjuna agreed. In this way Draupadi became the wife of five brothers rather than only the wife of Arjuna himself.

At the time Draupadi became queen, the Pandavas were facing many difficulties. The Kauravas had the intention of taking away all the land and other property that the Pandavas had inherited from their father. They had already devised many methods (yuktis) to cheat them or even get rid of them. Knowing that the Pandavas had so much wealth, the Kauravas invited them to a game of dice. The eldest brother, Yudhisthira, said that he would not go. Then the Kauravas sent the invitation in the name of their blind father, who was also the uncle of the Pandavas. It was the custom among kings of equal standing to invite each other to such games of chance. So, when the uncle sent the invitation, the Pandavas had to accept it.

Being very clever at gambling, the Kauravas cheated in that game while the Pandavas played honestly. When Yudhisthira, the eldest Pandava, was defeated in the game, he lost all the property and land, and finally even his wife, Draupadi, and his own brothers to the Kauravas. At that time Draupadi was asleep in the palace and so Duryodhana, the eldest brother of the Kauravas, ordered his vicious younger brother, Dushashan, to go and wake Draupadi and bring her to the court. Duryodhana asked Draupadi to sweep the floor. When she protested that she was the daughter of a king and not a sweeper, Dushashan grabbed her by her hair and began to disrobe her by pulling at her sari. Draupadi begged all the elders who were sitting in the court to help her. She begged her husbands, the Pandavas, to take revenge but Yudhisthira reminded them that they were slaves. So no one could come to her aid. Finally, Draupadi started calling out to God. Then a miracle began to happen. As Dushashan kept pulling at her sari, it just continued unravelling. Dushashan's hands became tired and so he went and sat down. It was then arranged that the five Pandavas with Draupadi should go into exile for twelve years and stay in hiding for one year after that.

The above story is spiritually significant in a number of ways. Firstly, Draupadi, the Shakti, is symbolised as the one who made effort to keep herself pure. She was considered pure because she was born out of a sacrificial fire, although she had now taken human form.

In this story Arjuna was shown to have very powerful concentration. He had been able to hit the eye of the fish while keeping his balance in a very unstable situation. In reality, this implies that keeping balance in one's spiritual life is very crucial while living in the old world. Symbolically, to be able to shoot the eye of the fish while it was spinning rapidly refers to being able to have perfect yoga. When one has a balanced and accurate love-link with the Supreme Father, the Supreme Light, one is able to focus the mind on Him. Such people become like Arjuna, the one with powerful concentration. Arjuna was also depicted as the one who gave respect and was obedient to his elders. He obeyed and respected his mother's direction to share Draupadi with his brothers. This shows that he had no attachment to any human soul.

The story of Draupadi's never-ending sari illustrates that only the determined practice of purity will protect us from the lure of lust. Only through a strong love-link with Baba will we be shown a miraculous way to escape from any threat to our spiritual well-being. The Supreme Soul has also said this about the time of destruction when everyone will be under disturbing influences. All support will be gone. There will be no one to protect us unless we are able to reach God's home in Madhuban or one of Baba's other houses, wherever they may be. The outside world will be unsafe and at that time people as vicious as demons with evil intent in their eyes will try to take away our chastity. However, if we have developed powerful yoga, one pure glance at such vicious souls will transform their intentions and they will see only our subtle form of light. This will happen because, when we are remembering God, we are in the highest state of soul-consciousness. So nothing can happen to us. Such is the power of a fully developed love-link with God.

GANESH

Destroyer of Obstacles

Ganesh, lord of the Ganas, dwarf demons, whose long-trunked, pot-bellied statue can be seen in most Indian towns and even as far away as East Java, is India's most popular god. Ganesh is worshipped before setting off on a journey or beginning a new business venture or during wedding negotiations. Ganesh is the god of practical wisdom and the remover of obstacles. He is the god of the scribes, who is invoked before writing books. He is also called Heramba, Lambakarna, meaning 'long-eared', Lambodara, meaning 'hang-bellied' and Gajanana, meaning 'with the face of an elephant'. ('Gaja' means 'elephant', 'anana' means 'face'.) It was Ganesh who broke his tusk, using it to write the Mahabharata, as dictated by the sage, Vyas.

There are many legends about why Ganesh has an elephant's head. The most probable explanation is that in the most ancient times of human history, worship of gods was associated with animals. Apollo, for instance, was a wolf, Athena an owl, Diana a bear and Zeus a bull. Ganesh was an elephant, just as Hanuman the monkey is now represented as a man with a monkey's head. The people of antiquity in India and also in Africa regarded the elephant as the wisest of all the animals because the elephant lives the longest and has such a good memory. The elephant's huge size demonstrates its noble birth. He is by right the king of the jungle. Just as the elephant pushes its way through the thickest and thorniest undergrowth, Ganesh makes a path for the traveller wherever he wants to go. Let us now look at one of the many myths related to the birth of Ganesh.

One day Parvati wanted a guardian to prevent anyone from intruding on her while she was bathing. So she took her bath oil and other secret

substances and formed the body of a man with a fat belly. Then she sprinkle over him her bath water, which came from the river Ganges, so that he came to life. When Shiva arrived, Ganesh her creation would not allow him to go near her. In his wrath Shiva cut off Ganesh's head. However, when Parvati explained the situation to Shiva, he realised his mistake. Looking around quickly, he saw an elephant. He cut off its head and put it on Ganesh's shoulders, in which form he can still be seen today. Shiva also granted Parvati the boon that Ganesh would be the first one worshipped on auspicious occasions.

Ganesh represents one who is wise. The cutting off his head represents a new birth and spiritual birth in which he realises that he is a soul, a child of God, the Supreme. Being wise (symbol of elephant) he helps God in His task of purifying the world and doing world service and so he helps in removing the obstacles of kaliyug. Hence, he is worshipped as an obstacle remover. Ganesh represents Brahma and the Brahmins of the Confluence Age who become God's helpers in transforming the old world into heaven.

GANESH AND KARTIKEYA

This famous story from the Purana is about the two sons of Shiva, Ganesh (also known as Skanda) and Kartikeya (also known as Kumara). Known as the god of wisdom and prudence, Ganesh, the destroyer of obstacles, is consulted at the beginning of every task. A good writer and learned in the scriptures, he wrote the Mahabharata at the dictation of the sage, Vyas. In the myth it is believed that Ganesh had two wives - Siddhi, meaning 'achievement' and Viddhi which means 'right method' - whom he had won over with his unlimited and farsighted intellect.

Kartikeya is the other son of Shiva. Represented riding on a peacock and carrying a bow and arrow, he is said to be the chief war-god of the Hindu pantheon. In South India he is called Subramanya.

The following story tells of a competition that took place between Ganesh and Kartikeya. They agreed that they would compete in a race around the world and whoever won would be eligible to marry two beautiful girls called Siddhi and Viddhi (one version of the story says that it was a mango rather than marrying two girls). Kartikeya set off and, after a long and weary journey, finally returned home. There he found that his brother had already married the two girls. Before doing so, Ganesh had reverently circled around his father, Shiva, acting on his belief that, as Shiva was the Lord of the Three Worlds, Trilokinath, doing this reverential walk around him was the same as walking around the physical world. In his wisdom he had avoided the flurry and haste of Kartikeya by adopting the right method (viddhi) and achieving success (siddhi). Thus he was able to claim victory.

GANGA The Mighty Ganges

The mighty Ganges River winds its way to the east right through the middle of India, through the immense plain called Hindustan. In the beginning it is said that there were two rivers, the Ganges and the Jamuna, gracefully curving down from the Himalayas, first flowing south, then turning eastwards. The twin rivers flowed ever closer to each other until they finally merged at Allahabad, the city of God.

Let us explore the myth behind the story of Ganga and its spiritual significance. Ganga was the daughter of the mountain-god, Himavan, and the sister of Parvati. While she was young, the gods kept her all to themselves for they considered her too precious and too beautiful to share with any human being. Through prolonged asceticism Bhagirath, son of Dilipa, a son of the pious King Ansuman, King of Ayodhya, induced Brahma to grant him a boon. He wanted Brahma to allow the sacred river, Ganga, to descend to earth so that the 60,000 burnt brothers of King Ansuman might be brought back to life. Brahma warned him that this would only be possible if Shiva consented to let the Ganga flow through his hair. Again after a long period of asceticism Bhagirath finally persuaded Shiva to agree. Roaring and foaming, the river raced down and would have completely flooded India, except for Shiva's hair acting like a dense forest, arresting the river's flow and forcing it to become the gentle river we know today.

If we consider these facts from a purely physical point of view, we understand that the river Ganges and other rivers originate from the melting of snow in the mountains and rain from the sky. Carrying down pure water from the higher regions, the rivers may carry the essence of medicinal herbs but they cannot purify souls. From a spiritual viewpoint, it is said that it is the Ganga of divine knowledge that purifies souls.

However, in respect of the Ganges, Baba is saying that it is not the water that purifies us, but knowledge. The Ganges is said to have come through Shankar's locks of hair because the head symbolises wisdom. So, the water emerging from the hair represents knowledge flowing from the intellect.

God has the knowledge of the beginning, the middle and the end of the cycle. The Supreme Soul's sanskaras are sanskaras of benevolence and so he gives this knowledge to everyone. Our intellect then retains this knowledge. So knowledge is seen as being in the intellect and staying in the centre of the forehead where the soul is. This is why it is said that the Ganges emerges from the head and that Bhagirath brought it.

The Ganges River has existed eternally in the physical world whereas Shiv Baba, the Ocean of Knowledge, exists in the incorporeal world. Brahma Baba became the instrument to bring the incorporeal into the physical, thus bringing benefit to the whole world.

'Bhagirath' means 'lucky chariot'. The name of Brahma is also Bhagirath which means 'bhagyashali' ('fortunate' or 'lucky'). 'Bhagi' signifies 'lucky'. 'Rath' means 'chariot'. So the lucky chariot brought the Ganges. On the path of bhakti it is said that the Ganges came down to earth but that its currents were far too strong. It is also said that, because of this, it could not come straight through Shankar's locks of hair and so Brahma gave his pot, a kind of jar, to be used. If it had descended straight onto the earth, it would have caused flooding and would have destroyed everything. Thus, to bring it gradually so that everybody could benefit from it, it first had to come into the jar in Brahma's hand. Brahma then walked ahead and showed the path.

Led by Brahma, the Ganges went to the people, to those who had become unconscious. Bhagirath led the way and the Ganges followed him along that path. The people who were unconscious became conscious again and became the grandsons of Sagar, 'sagar' meaning 'ocean'. In this spiritual life we are the grandchildren of the Ocean of Knowledge, the Ocean of Peace, the Ocean of Purity, the Ocean of Bliss and the Ocean of Love. We too had become unconscious, owing to anger and lust. Then knowledge was given and we were purified again. This story is actually connected to the present time. God Shiva often tells us in the murlis that it is we who are the river Ganges flowing from the Ocean of Knowledge.

GAUMUKH

Gaumukh means 'the mouth of the cow'. It is the name of a holy pilgrimage site in India, situated on Mount Abu in Rajasthan. The monument there consists of a stone, carved in the shape of a cow's head with water flowing from its mouth into a small pool. The water symbolises the milk a cow gives to sustain life. On the path of bhakti people believe that this flowing water comes from the Ganges to sustain and purify those who drink it.

Just as mother's milk sustains the child, milk from the cow also has great significance as a symbol of sustenance as milk represents spiritual knowledge. It is Shiva who spoke this knowledge through Brahma. Even though Brahma is a father, he also plays the role of a mother. This is why the symbols of both the cow and the bull are used in relation to Brahma Baba. As a mother, a cow sustains through milk. Spiritually, the nectar of knowledge flows through the mouth of Brahma Baba, just as the water flows from the cow's mouth at Gaumukh. In this way Brahma Baba is like a mother because he sustains us with knowledge.

THE SHRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA

The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is the jewel of all the scriptures because it has the essence of all the scriptures in it. 'Shri' means 'elevated' and 'mat' means 'directions'. 'Bhagavad' means 'Godly'. 'Gita' means song. Therefore 'Shrimad Bhagavad Gita' means 'the elevated directions sung by God' or 'the celestial song of God'. The Gita is the only scripture in which God Himself comes and speaks. The phrase, 'God speaks,' is only found in the Gita.

Historically, the Gita was written between the second century BC and the second century AD. The Bhagavad Gita is actually narrated in the bhishma parva ('parva', meaning 'chapter') in volume 6 of the epic poem, the Mahabharata, which tells the story of the great war, and it was subsequently recorded by Vyas for the benefit of humanity. It comprises 701 verses in eighteen chapters. The scene is a battlefield just before the war at Kurukshetra near New Delhi, India, about 5000 years ago. People believe it records a dialogue that took place between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the eve of the battle.

In ancient times there was a king who had two sons, Dhritarashtra and Pandu. Dhritarashtra, the elder son, was born blind, so Pandu inherited the kingdom. Pandu had five sons, who were called the Pandavas and Dhritarashtra had one hundred sons, who were known as the Kauravas. After the death of king Pandu, the Pandavas became collectively the lawful rulers. Duryodhana (son of Dhritarashtra), however, was a very jealous person. He wanted the whole kingdom. It had been divided into two halves between the Pandavas and the Kauravas but Duryodhana was not satisfied with his share. He wanted the entire kingdom for himself. After several unsuccessful attempts to kill off the Pandavas and take away their half, he

unlawfully took possession of the entire kingdom of the Pandavas and refused to give back even one hectare without a war. When all mediation by Lord Krishna and others failed, the great Mahabharat war began. The Pandavas were unwilling participants but they had only two choices: fight for their rights as a matter of duty or run away from the war and accept defeat in the name of peace and non-violence.

The Gita began with a question from the blind king, Dhritarashtra, asking the sage, Sanjay, what was happening, not only on the field of Kurukshetra (where his sons and the Pandavas were gathered to fight) but also on the field of dharma (meaning 'virtue' and 'duty'). In reply, Sanjay, with his mystic power of vision, painted verbal pictures for Dhritarashtra of the battlefield, describing how both armies were arrayed against each other, blowing their conch horns to show their readiness to fight. In the beginning Duryodhana briefed Drona about both the armies. Then there was a description of the preparations for the battle. After that, Arjuna wanted to observe the warriors drawn up for battle, and asked Krishna to place his chariot between the two armies.

The entire theme of the Bhagavad Gita changes at this point and the most significant part of the Gita begins. Now we see a different Arjuna. The circumstances make him depressed and confused. When he saw his most revered guru, as well as his very dear friends, close relatives and many innocent warriors, running away from the battlefield for the sake of preserving peace and non-violence, he was filled with deep compassion and overcome by attachment for them. He became nervous and said that he did not want to fight, even for the sake of the three worlds. He felt that there could be no happiness when one's own people were killed. It would bring him greater happiness if he were killed, unarmed and showing no resistance. The possible consequences of the war horrified him. He was expected to do his duty but Arjuna's confusion made him lose his equanimity. Finally, he lay down his bow and arrows and sat at the back of the chariot.

The Gita quotes the words spoken by God, the Supreme Soul Himself. "When there is irreligiousness, that is, complete degradation of religion, especially in Bharat, I, the Supreme Soul, will descend and establish a new kingdom. I come to liberate all the sadhus and sanyasis and destroy the sinners. I come to establish one religion and for that I come in every age."

Everything is accurate in this verse except the words, 'in every age', which have been misunderstood. In reality God comes only during the last age of every cycle, which is called the confluence age or sangamyug.

Therefore, the Gita is the only scripture which is spoken by God. In the confluence age God Himself comes and gives the knowledge of the real Gita through the mouth of Brahma. When Arjuna was confused and said, "How can I fight? I don't want to kill all these people. How can I do that to them? They are my kinsmen, my friends, my family members." Then God told him, "Well, you have to do something," and Arjuna said, "OK, if you want me to kill, you will have to give me the strength to do it." So then God started teaching him yoga so that he could get the strength to kill. However, when he reached the middle of the battlefield he asked God again, "God, how can I remain stable? How can I concentrate? How can I control my mind?" In reality, he had very strong distaste for the world and he did not want to rule. He felt like this because God had given him visions in which he had been shown much future bloodshed in which everyone would die.

He said, "I don't want to be instrumental for this bloodshed. I want to renounce all action and become a sanyasi." On hearing this, God warned him, "Arjuna, don't do that. If you do, you would be considered a coward. Don't run away. Stay and fight. It is your duty to do so. It is your responsibility. You can't run away from it." There are different chapters in the Gita about this same aspect which are presented in different ways. One moment Arjuna was ready to fight but the next moment he wasn't. Each time God spoke to Arjuna, encouraging him, he felt he was ready, but the next moment his courage deserted him, and so it continued in that way.

God, however, kept on encouraging him, "See, you are a great warrior. I can see a crown on your head. You are very brave, courageous and bold." Thus, one moment he was ready and the next moment he lost heart.

Arjuna also asked God, "God, You have come now but when will You come again? You have said, 'I will come again.' but when will that happen?" In reply, God said, "Just forget about when I will come again. Just do what I tell you now." Arjuna was told by God, "Arjuna, you do not realise that you and I have met before. You do not know about your birth. I have come to tell you about these things. So start doing what I say. Accept what I say

and believe me." Arjuna said, "How can I believe you? You are in such a simple form. How can I know that you are God? Show me your real form." So Arjuna, despite knowledge, yoga and love, still did not believe that it was God.

He then said to God, "Show me a vision of Yourself as You really are. Otherwise, how can I know you are really God?" So God gave him a vision. In that vision he saw a huge form, a very big face with the mouth wide-open. He also saw how all the human beings of the world were either running or flying into God's mouth. He said this was the variety-form of Vishnu. Arjuna was frightened and said, "Stop it now. I don't want to see any more." He reacted in that way because God had shown him this as a vision of destruction. God had shown Himself to be the God of Death, the Death of All Deaths. Thus Arjuna said, "God, I cannot tolerate this. It's too much for me." And God took back that vision.

God then asked him, "All right, now what do you want next?" and then said, "Arjuna, do what you want to do. It's up to you. Make that decision yourself." The slokas (verses) in the Gita quote God as saying, "Do what you want to do. It's all up to you. I'm not going to tell you anything anymore. Whatever I have to tell you I have already told you. If you don't want to obey Me, it's all right. Do whatever you want." Then Arjuna began to feel frightened again and he said, "No, no, God." He touched His feet and said, "No, God, You tell me what to do and I will do whatever You say." He touched His feet again and said, "I will immediately do anything you say."

Then God spoke again, asking, "Why is it that until now you've not listened to anything I've said? Why is it that only now you say that you will do what I ask?" Arjuna answered, "The reason I'll do it now is because I have renounced attachment. I only now understand what You were saying and my attachment has finished. I've finally realised who I am and who You are. Now I've realised everything and so I am ready." His agreement signalled the last chapter of the Gita, the eighteenth chapter, in which Arjuna said, "God, I have now conquered attachment. I have had self-realisation. Now I will do whatever You say."

The Gita consists of all the versions spoken by the Father Himself. Now let us recollect our days after we came to study Raja Yoga. Each one of

us would have had a similar experience. Each one of us is Arjuna. So anyone who becomes the child of the Supreme Soul and hears the knowledge is Arjuna. The figure in the scripture, Arjuna, is the one who hears from God. Arjuna really means arjan, the one who has the aspiration and the inspiration to learn. The aspirant, the arjan, is the one who takes the initiative and reaps the fruit.

Brahma Baba became perfect and left his body on the 18th January 1969. The Supreme Soul has come and is narrating to us the eighteenth chapter of the Gita. Finally, Arjuna gave his reins to God signifying that he had surrendered the reins of his intellect. Since both the mind and the intellect are in God's hands, it will be easy for us to fight the battle. This is the time to become a real Arjuna which means to stop asking questions as to what, how and when. Arjuna became a real Arjuna only in the last chapter, the eighteenth chapter, because until then he was doubtful. Though he had not doubted God, he had doubted himself. He had great love for God and had faith in Him. He was, however, doubtful about himself. He did not know that he could really do what God was asking of him. He only accepted this fully when he was able to renounce his attachment to his body and his bodily relations.

This signifies that, we can only understand what the Supreme Soul is saying, when we are able to renounce body-consciousness and the attachment to bodily relationships. If there are attractions and attachments to the body, bodily relations and possessions, then it is not possible for us to understand fully what the Supreme Soul is saying. What had God requested from Arjuna? God requested that Arjuna's mind should become stable and that he should start fighting. The final test for all of us is also this "nashto moha, smriti labda", that is: conqueror of attachment and embodiment of remembrance.

HANUMAN The Mahavir

One of the main aims in human life is to be constantly happy and stable. If one faces all situations in life with courage, complete faith in the self and undivided love for God, then there will be victory. This will lead to constant happiness and stability. A very good example of this is the character, Hanuman, as depicted in the Ramayana. In the murlis God sometimes describes Hanuman as a mahavir. 'Maha' means great and 'vir' means warrior. Mahavir is also the name of the great teacher of Jainism who lived at the same time as Buddha and who did intense meditation. Although he was confronted by many problems in his life, he conquered his fear through his courage and bravery. However, in this story 'mahavir', refers to Hanuman.

Hanuman was a monkey-deity renowned for his learning, agility and speed, as well as for his faithful service to Rama. He was the commander-in-chief of the monkey warriors of Sugriva's kingdom and is still venerated as a god in India. As the son of Pavan, the lord of the wind, Hanuman possessed the faculty of flying. He is one of the chief characters in the Ramayana, where he is the faithful general of Rama. In Hindu mythology it is said that he jumped from India to Sri Lanka in one leap and that he had the power to seize clouds and tear up trees and rocks. He could not only fly at the speed of wind but could also alter his size at will and make himself invisible. In battle he was a terrifying figure, as enormous and overpowering as a mountain.

Unlike the monkeys of today, he was gigantic. He had yellow fur and a red face, while his tail was many miles long and his voice was as loud as thunder. The demons, hoping to play a trick on him, put tar on his tail and set it alight, but Hanuman used his flaming tail to set fire to the entire city of Lanka. It is stated in the Ramayana that Hanuman went ahead of Rama

and the army of monkeys to deliver Rama's message to Sita and to spy on the land. Along the way he had many adventures.

While he was on his way to Lanka to deliver the message, Hanuman began to think that while he would be able to leap across to Lanka, he might not have the strength to leap back. However, an old monkey advised Hanuman that, if he had confidence in his strength and in his divine origin, he would be able to accomplish the task. When Hanuman reached Lanka, he reduced his size to that of a cat and wandered about freely, taking note of the city's defences. He even wandered into Ravan's bedroom. Eventually he located Sita and destroyed Ravan's pleasure-gardens. While escaping, he set fire to Lanka.

During the battle Hanuman proved himself to be a valiant warrior. His greatest service, however, was to fly to the Himalayas to bring back medicinal herbs with which to cure Lakshman and others wounded on the battlefield. Apart from pharmacology and medicine, Hanuman also mastered many sciences, grammar and poetry.

Hanuman found complete fulfilment in rendering selfless service to his Master. When the battle of Lanka was over and the armies had returned to Ayodhya, God offered him any boon that he cared to name. Hanuman asked to be allowed to live for as long as men spoke of the deeds of God. In this way he actually acquired immortality for the memory of God will never die.

Let us look at the spiritual significance of this remarkable character, Hanuman. Before we came to God, we were like monkeys, that is, we had many desires and vices. Now we have love for God and are His humble servers. Baba always gives examples of mahavirs. Hanuman was very brave. When Sita was in jail in Ravan's kingdom, he went to give the message to Sita; the soul who was in bondage. Everybody told Hanuman that he would never be able to set foot in Lanka because Ravan was very powerful and would kill him.

However, God's great and humble server that he was, he was not at all concerned. Unshakeable, firm in faith in himself and with love for God, he did manage to reach there. Because of this Rama himself bowed to him. The significance of this story is that, when we serve with true love as Hanuman

did, with dedication and faith, God Himself will bow to us. When there is courage, there will be victory. Baba refers to the foot as the foot of the intellect, which should be unshakeable.

Hanuman was a humble server who had great love for God. Once when he was given a garland of diamonds, he broke it apart and said that the diamonds were worthless if they did not have God's name on them. This symbolises that material things are of limited use.

Another power Hanuman had was the power to fly. Once Lakshman was hit by Indra and became unconscious. Hanuman was told to bring life-giving herbs back from the mountain. He flew away and brought back the whole mountain of herbs. In this case the life-giving herbs signify knowledge. Indra is a god known for his ego, because of which he fell to the earthly world. Thus, when Lakshman was hit by Indra, it meant that he was hit by ego and became unconscious. It is we souls who have to give the life-giving herbs, the knowledge, to those people who are full of ego in order to uplift them spiritually.

Hanuman had true love, was hard-working, very dedicated and humble, and had brought the life-giving herbs for the upliftment of Lakshman. He actually moved the entire mountain, which signifies that even the heaviest task becomes very light when it is done with humility and love for God. Hanuman had so much love for God that, when he opened his chest, only Rama could be seen in his heart.

Hanuman is considered to have had such humility that he would wait outside a gathering near the shoes rather than taking up a place someone else could occupy. In the murli Baba refers to the foot of the intellect. Leaving shoes outside signifies leaving the ego of the intellect outside so that we can imbibe God's knowledge. Hanuman's example shows that we do not have to prove ourselves, as true humility will always be recognised.

Hanuman is also shown with a red-coloured face, signifying the Brahm element. Hanuman's powerful bravery shows that he is linked to the subtle world. His power comes from yoga with God. This means that we get power when we link ourselves with God.

Hanuman went to Lanka to give a message to Sita. However, Ravan wanted to prevent him from doing that, so Ravan set Hanuman's tail on

fire. This, however, did not prevent Hanuman from fulfilling his duty because he then turned this apparent setback to his own advantage and set the whole of Lanka on fire with his tail, thus liberating Sita. Baba refers to Hanuman's tail as body-consciousness (specifically the vice of ego), so the spiritual meaning of this is that only by burning off all body-consciousness (and being egoless) can the soul be liberated. Attachment, greed, ego, lust and anger are all vices of monkeys that need to be burnt. The tail of the monkey burnt the whole of Lanka. This signifies that only when body-consciousness is completely destroyed are we able to give God's message effectively to the whole world.

Despite warnings from many about the power of Ravan's vices, God's humble server, Hanuman, still flew to give the message of God's knowledge to Sita, who represents all the souls of the world. Similarly, we have to become as unshakeable as Hanuman when we do godly service. In the story an old monkey reminded Hanuman of his strength and divine origin. This represents the coming of God Shiva into the old body of Brahma Baba to remind us of our true, original qualities and our eternal relationship with God, thus giving us strength, courage and confidence.

HARISCHANDRA

Honesty is one of the most important virtues of all. It is the basis of our relationship with God and with others. Honesty is the guide to one's conscience. Honesty means not seeing things on a superficial level, but from a holistic perspective in which one is able to perceive deeper significance of a particular situation or person. It is seeing everything as it is, not adding or subtracting anything from the whole. When one lies, one has to tell ten more lies to cover up. When one is honest, however, one needs to say things only once. Now we are going to hear the story of king Harischandra who always spoke the truth.

Harischandra is said to be the twenty-eighth king of the sun dynasty and was famous for his sense of justice. His queen was named Taramati. For his boundless generosity and his numerous sacrifices to Indra the latter invited him to come and live with him in heaven. One day while the king was riding through a forest, he heard loud lamentations which seemed to be coming from a group of women. King Harischandra saw it as his duty to protect those in trouble. So he decided to investigate. As he approached the group, he recognised a Brahmin sage called Vishvamitra. The sage was so provoked by this intrusion into his territory that he demanded satisfaction from the king and began to test him in a variety of ways. Harischandra, who regarded it as his duty to honour all Brahmins and sacrifice to them all he owned, relinquished unquestioningly whatever the Brahmin sage asked for. In this way Vishvamitra took all the king's possessions: his palace, his treasures and his whole kingdom. He also demanded that he pay a large amount of compensation. To do this Harischandra, as well as his wife and child, had to leave the kingdom so that they could earn the compensation money.

With his wife and son, the ex-king left for the pilgrimage place of Benares. Alas! When they arrived there, they found Vishvamitra waiting for them.

At an auction the king offered himself as a slave but, because he was very lean and frail and unused to hard work, nobody wanted him. However, somebody at the auction did offer a huge sum of money for his wife. Realising that nothing lasts forever, the poor king felt he had no choice but to let her go. Weeping bitterly, he sold his wife because he needed to raise the money to keep his promise. The wife begged that their child be allowed to stay with her and her request was granted.

The king had now got together most of the money he needed but there was still a little more to be paid. Unfortunately, nobody wanted to give him a job, so finally Vishvamitra himself sold the king into slavery to a greedy slave-dealer called Chandala, who used to beat his slaves daily. The ex-king was sent every night to a cemetery to steal treasures from the dead. He thought to himself, sadly, "Have I come to such a low state that I have to steal from dead bodies?" but realised that he had virtually no choice. By working there he would be able to raise the money he needed to pay the remainder of the compensation, as he had promised. Before he could accumulate the required amount, however, a woman in a white veil came to cremate her child, who had died of snakebite. The rules stipulated that she first had to pay a cremation fee but she had no money. During their brief encounter the two recognised each other and the king realised that the dead child was none other than his own son. His wife then proposed to him that they die together on their son's funeral pyre. What could the poor king do but first insist on the payment for his son's funeral, as it was his duty to collect fees for the rites performed? This he had to do because he was not his own master anymore, but a slave.

At this point of utter conscientiousness Harischandra was finally rewarded for his integrity. The gods, Indra and Vishnu, appeared in front of him to honour him for having borne his sufferings for so long with such dignity, and praised him for being a great king, who had kept his word and had never uttered even one lie in his whole life. He had even been willing to sacrifice his own family for the sake of truth. God, Indra, then invited Harischandra to heaven but the king protested that he could not go without

permission from his master. Chandala, his master, then revealed himself to be the god, Dharma, the god of justice, who descends in disguise to test those with a reputation for great honesty and integrity, such as King Harischandra himself. Vishvamitra then renounced all claims on the king's property and family. Thus, Harischandra and his wife became king and queen once more. However, the good king protested that he still could not go to heaven without his faithful subjects, just as Brahma Baba does not want to go back to heaven without his children. This problem was solved by Indra, who brought the king and queen's son, Rohit, back to life so that Vishvamitra could inaugurate the young prince as king in his father's place. Harischandra was now free to go to heaven.

This story teaches us that one should always adhere to promises made, should always speak the truth and be honest. Honesty means never to misuse anything given to us in trust. Even at the point of death one should not utter falsehood. A further significance is that we have to pass all tests and obstacles that come our way before we can go to heaven. The story of Harischandra is an example of simple living and high moral thinking.

HATAMTAI

Once upon a time there lived a family in which there were always arguments, quarrels, confusion and tension - all because of the vice of anger. One of the members of the family thought to himself, "How long can this go on?" Fed up with the situation, he went to Hatamtai, a guru, looking for a solution. The guru gave him a bead, telling him to put it in his mouth whenever another person in the family became angry. The guru also told him that the bead would be effective only if he kept it in his mouth for at least ten minutes. The man took the bead and went home.

One day when one of the family members grew angry again, the man quickly put the bead in his mouth, closing it tightly. The angry person grew increasingly frustrated because there was no response from the man. What was the point of shouting, if the other person didn't react? So, gradually he gave up fighting.

What does putting the bead in the mouth signify? In bhakti stories a bead signifies light. So, in this story it signifies that the individual now has the awareness of being both a bead of the rosary and a point of light. In this awareness, no matter what the other person says or what the situation may be, a soul will not react but will remain in a peaceful, soul-conscious state.

The spiritual lesson we can all learn is that our silent and peaceful attitude will help influence others to be peaceful, too. Our attitude must be pure. With our positive attitude we can change not only the attitude of the other person but also the atmosphere around us. The Supreme Soul has also said that, when an individual is angry, it is best to remain cool and shower that person with coolness. So, the bead of Hatamtai serves as a reminder of the original form of the self, a point of light, and of the soul's original nature of peace.

HIRANYAKASHYAP AND PRAHLAD

Many believe that ascetic practices (tapas), undertaken over a period of time, will fulfil some specific worldly goal. However, if the practice of asceticism were to be used for worldly gain and selfish purposes, then the end result would be more of a disastrous one. If the achievements are used for a good cause, then truth will always triumph over falsehood. To illustrate this point, the following story of Hiranyakashyap and Prahlad is told in India, specifically during the festival of Holi. Holi is the festival in which people sprinkle wet colours on one another, have an auspicious reunion with friends and relatives and end the festival by lighting a bonfire which represents Holika. The story is also related to mythology and is about one of the incarnations of Vishnu as half-man and half-lion, Narasimha.

Once there was a demon king, Hiranyakashyap, who wanted to be free of old age, disease and the might of his enemies. In fact, Hiranyakashyap wanted to gain immortality and rule the whole universe. Even though he was a demon, he was also a great devotee of Shiva. As a result of his intense austerities, tapas, Shiva agreed to grant him any boon that he might wish for. Just as his brother had done before him, Hiranyakashyap asked for the boon that he might never be killed by humans, beasts or gods, neither inside nor outside, neither by day nor by night, neither up nor down, nor by any weapon.

Bholanath Shiva, the Lord of Innocence, who was easily pleased, gave boons to anyone, even devils, as He saw only their love and devotion. So Shiva gave him the boon. Feeling protected, Hiranyakashyap immediately overreached himself. He forbade worship of all gods, substituting worship of himself.

Hiranyakashyap had a young son called Prahlad, who was a pious devotee of god Vishnu. When Hiranyakashyap demanded that everyone worship him as God, Prahlad refused, saying that there was only one God. Hiranyakashyap tried persuasion and torture but still Prahlad refused to give up his worship of the true God. Hiranyakashyap ordered serpents to bite him to death but Prahlad was unaffected and the serpents fell into feverish disarray, their fangs broken and fear in their hearts. Huge elephants were also sent to trample the boy, but all to no avail.

Since his many attempts to kill Prahlad were unsuccessful, Hiranyakashyap finally conspired with his sister, Holika. A devotee of Shiva, Holika had been granted the boon of not being destroyed by fire whenever she wore a special robe. Holika sat Prahlad on her lap. Hiranyakashyap took a match and set fire to them. Immediately the robe flew off Holika and wrapped itself around Prahlad. Holika was destroyed in the fire but Prahlad remained safe.

Hiranyakashyap turned to his son and said, "All right, if your god exists, show him to me. Is he in this pillar at the doorway?" Prahlad answered with full faith, "Yes". Then, saying that he would kill the god, Hiranyakashyap kicked the pillar. At that moment Vishnu stepped out of the pillar in the form of Narasimha, a creature who was half-man and half-lion. By this time dusk had fallen. This is the time which stands at the confluence of day and night, so Narasimha took Hiranyakashyap in his lap and tore him apart with his claws. In this way Hiranyakashyap met his end without the conditions of the boon granted by Shiva being broken. The circumstances of Hiranyakashyap's death fell outside the conditions of God's boon. The time was evening-neither day nor night; the place was the doorway of the palace-neither inside nor outside the demon's house; and the assailant was half-man and half-lion-neither human, beast nor god.

The significance of this story is that the demon, in the form of the vices (lust, anger, ego, attachment, greed and jealousy), is destroyed only at the auspicious confluence age, which is neither the iron age (kaliyug) nor the golden age (satyug). As stated earlier, this story is usually told during the festival of Holi. A thread is tied around a small piece of bread and placed on the fire and, although the bread is burnt black, the thread remains

clean. This is a memorial of how the evil of the entire old world (the bread) is destroyed, while Prahlad (the thread, the soul) is eternal.

During Holi people make bonfires and burn everything old in their household. This symbolically implies that truth will always triumph over falsehood. Furthermore, Narasimha represents God Shiva, who comes to remove all the sorrow and vices in the world. Prahlad represents the child of God Shiva, the soul, who was unaffected by the wrong actions done to him by his family members and relatives when he refused to bow down to the vices.

THE STORY OF IMMORTALITY

In many stories Shiva and Shankar have been identified as one but in reality they are not the same individual. This aspect is not under discussion in this book. It is the intention here simply to narrate the stories, showing their spiritual significance. There are many stories pertaining to Shiva and his wife, Parvati. The following one, which is quite well-known, tells how Parvati begins to fall asleep while Shiva is relating to her the story of immortality. Spiritually, the significance of this story is that Shiva, the Supreme Soul, is telling all of us souls, who are also Parvatis, the story of how to become immortal.

One day on the top of a mountain Shiva was telling the story of immortality to Parvati. While Shiva was speaking, Parvati began to fall asleep. When Shiva remarked on her eyes being closed, she explained that she was not actually asleep but had closed her eyes because she was then able to concentrate better on the story. In reality, however, she had been asleep. Nearby there was a pigeon also listening to the story. While Shiva was speaking, it kept answering, "Mmm, mmm", which gave Shiva the impression that Parvati really was listening. (One version of the story says that it was a parrot rather than a pigeon.) When Shiva finished the story, he asked Parvati if she had enjoyed it and asked her to repeat the content. Parvati apologised, saying that she could not do so. Seeing the pigeon, Shiva realised that it was the bird which had been listening and responding to the story. The pigeon became afraid because it had pretended to be Parvati. Seeing Shiva's anger, it flew away in an effort to escape being punished. Shiva wanted to shoot the pigeon with his arrow but the pigeon reduced itself in size and flew into the mouth of Vyas' wife, who at that time was drying her hair. (Vyas is often mentioned

in the murlis as the writer of many of the scripture stories.) The pigeon sat in her stomach for twelve years and during that whole time she was considered to be pregnant.

After twelve years the pigeon was born as a twelve-year-old boy named Sukhdev. As soon as he was born, he started running into the jungle. Vyas, his father, ran after him to stop him. A few women were bathing in the Ganges and Sukhdev ran past them. Vyas, however, stopped and looked at the women who became angry and said to him, "The way you're looking at us is offensive." Vyas said, "You didn't mind the boy looking at you as he ran past. So why are you getting angry at me?" The women replied that the boy was so soul-conscious that he hadn't even noticed that they were bathing, whereas he, an old man, was so body-conscious that his way of looking at them was insulting.

The significance of this story is that the one who has heard the story of immortality goes beyond seeing the physical form, by remaining soul-conscious. So, by listening to knowledge, we enjoy the fruit of it, not only for twelve years but for 2500 years in the golden and silver ages when we are constantly soul-conscious. Being soul-conscious, the boy was able to live happily in his mother's womb for twelve years as if he were living in a palace. The Supreme Soul tells us we can also exist in great comfort in the mother's womb during the golden and silver ages, if at this time we have listened to and understood the story of immortality.

The second aspect of the story is that the vision of those who have heard the story of immortality is totally pure, that is, it is soul-conscious vision, whereas the vision of those who read or write the scriptures is body-conscious. Once we listen to the story of immortality, we become immortal, which means we cannot die. That is why Shiva could not kill the pigeon in the story of immortality. Even if we are like the pigeon, without any sort of understanding, we can become wise like Sukhdev, totally innocent in our vision.

The Supreme Soul is saying that we can become like Sukhdev by listening to the godly versions and giving happiness to others. The significance of this story relates to the confluence age, the age in which supersensuous joy and immense happiness are attained. The conclusion is that, if we listen to the story of immortality, that is, the knowledge from God, we can gain immortality, happiness and purity.

KANS AND PUTNA

At the time of Krishna's birth, Kans, the demon king, was king of Mathura. Kans had dreamt that the eighth child of Devaki and her husband, Vasudeva, would kill him. So he ordered all of the newborn babies in the kingdom to be killed. Over the years as soon as a child was born to Devaki, Kans would take the child and kill it. Devaki lost her first seven children in this way.

Devaki received a vision of Vishnu, who said that he would be born to her and that he would be responsible for killing Kans. (Krishna is said to be an incarnation of Vishnu.) In time Devaki gave birth to her eighth child at midnight. (The celebration of Krishna's birth is called Janmashtami, meaning eighth birth; Krishna's birth heralds the dawn of our eighth births in the golden age.) It was a dark, rainy night and Vasudeva was able to smuggle the child past the sleeping guards and take him to another kingdom. As he carried the child, the head of a cobra rose up to protect them from the rain. When they reached the river, Krishna's foot touched the water and Jamuna, the river goddess, rose up and bowed as the waters parted to allow them to pass through.

Vasudeva reached the cottage of a villager, Nandalal. His wife, Jashoda, had just given birth to a baby girl (who was, in fact, a goddess), and they exchanged babies. Vasudeva then made his way back to Mathura, his absence undiscovered. Kans, hearing of the birth of Devaki's child, came to kill it. The moment he took the baby girl in his hands to dash her to the ground, she flew into the air and, before disappearing, cried out, "The one who will kill you already lives."

Word reached Kans that Krishna was living in the neighbouring kingdom and he made many unsuccessful attempts to kill him. At last he devised a plan wherein Putna, one of his courtiers, dressed up as a beautiful woman visited the village where Krishna lived and asked Jashoda if she could feed the child, Krishna, with her milk, intending to poison him. Jashoda agreed and Putna sat Krishna on her lap. However, Krishna recognised that she was a devil and, before taking her milk, he reached up and strangled her.

In later years Kans finally challenged Krishna to a battle. Jashoda didn't want him to accept the challenge but Nandalal knew that he was God and he sent him to the kingdom of Kans. Kans used all his powers against Krishna, but to no avail, and so he finally met his end.

The significance of this story is that good triumphs over evil. The evil-doers seem to get away with whatever they do, for a time but in the end, those who are good and follow the righteous play triumph in the end. We can say that according to the law of karma, those who do evil will reap their just rewards.

KARNA

The Son of the Sun-God

Sura, the most famed of the Yadavas, had a daughter, Kunti, who was very beautiful, and a son, Vasudeva, who was later to become the ruler of Mathura. Kunti's father gave Kunti to his sister's son who had no children. When she was a young girl, she used to worship the gods and also look after the comforts of the guests. Once she was asked to look after a sage called Durvasa. She greeted him with humility and devotion, and regularly brought him offerings of food.

The sage was very pleased with her and, before leaving, gave her a mantra, a secret charm. He told her that any deity she might choose to invoke would present himself to her and would give her a son. She chose the sun-god, Surya, the most radiant of all gods. The sun-god responded to her invocation and came down to earth in his full brilliance. He told her that he knew of the boon given by Durvasa and said that he would like her to bear him a son. She hesitated, saying that she was an unmarried girl and was afraid of how her relatives might react. However, she did conceive a child and finally gave birth to a beautiful son whom she called Karna. In reality this child was born through the power of yoga. The sun-god represents God Shiva who is the Sun of Knowledge.

It is said that Karna was born in full armour (kavacha) and earrings (kundala), which would protect him throughout his entire life. The sun-god told Kunti that he would be a great warrior and very generous and would earn everlasting fame. The sun-god also told her that nobody would pass judgement on her. Kunti, however, still fearing the censure of her community, wrapped the shining child in a piece of silk and placed him in a wooden box, setting him afloat on the river Jamuna. There, the little foundling was picked up by Nandana, charioteer to King Dhritarashtra.

Kunti subsequently married Pandu, the brother of King Dhritarashtra. Pandu became the father of the five Pandavas by his two wives, Madri and Kunti. Each woman was then considered to be the mother of all five of them. Since Dhritarashtra was blind, and ancient law deemed him incapable of reigning, Pandu became the king of Hastinapura. When the Pandavas' parents retired to the forest, King Dhritarashtra invited the Pandavas to the palace. Yudhishthira, the eldest of the Pandavas, was made heir apparent, which aroused the jealousy of Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra's eldest son and the leader of the Kauravas. It was this jealousy which became the underlying cause of the great Mahabharat war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

Karna grew up to be a very handsome boy. The god, Indra, noticing the shining armour of the sun-child, persuaded him to hand it over to him. In exchange, Indra gave Karna a spear that would never miss its target. Later Duryodhana made Karna king of Anga, which is an old name for Bengal.

One day Karna appeared as a suitor at the swayamvara of Draupadi. He won the contest with his javelin that never missed its target but Draupadi spurned him because she thought he was the son of a lowly charioteer. Little did she know that, from all those present, only Krishna was the equal of Karna, son of the sun-god. As a result of Draupadi's contempt, Karna gave his allegiance to her enemy, Duryodhana, the chief of the Kauravas.

At this point Krishna went to Kunti and told her that the time had come for Karna to know who his real mother was. Summoning up her courage, Kunti told Karna the truth and asked him for a boon. She wanted him to protect all her five sons, irrespective of what might happen in the future. Karna agreed to spare the lives of all her sons, except Arjuna, because he had already promised Duryodhana that he would kill him. However, Karna reminded her that, even if Arjuna should die, she would still have five sons because he would be alive.

When the great Mahabharat war broke out, Karna was killed by Arjuna, his half-brother. It was then revealed to Arjuna that Karna had been the eldest son of his own mother. The Pandavas then mourned their mother's first-born with all due respect, and showed kindness to his widows and dependants.

The spiritual lesson that we learn from this story is that although Karna was a great warrior and donor, he made the mistake of being on the wrong side, the Kauravas who stood for evil. Thus, he was destined to fail from the beginning because Krishna himself was advisor to the Pandavas, those who followed the directions of God.

THE KING WHO CONQUERED ATTACHMENT

Attachment is one of the vices that robs us of our peace of mind and destroys the power to discern accurately. Attachment destroys all truth. One who has attachment cannot imbibe wisdom. It is only at the confluence age that we are able to destroy attachment through applying godly knowledge and having a loving link with God. God has promised us that those who are able to become conquerors of attachment will become the masters of the world and claim the throne in the future kingdom. The following story is of a king who conquered attachment.

Once a prince went hunting with his many soldiers. He was a very good hunter. As he was hunting, he moved so fast that all his soldiers were left behind. He then ended up alone in the jungle. He was very thirsty and wanted to drink some water. As he approached a nearby cottage, he saw a saint (rishi) sitting there, meditating. So the prince went and asked him for a cup of water. When the rishi asked him to introduce himself, the prince told him that he was a child of a king who had conquered attachment. The saint said, "Impossible! A king? A conqueror of attachment? Here I am, a renunciate (sanyasi), and I am not able to conquer attachment. Yet you say that your father is a king and that he has conquered attachment."

The prince responded, "Not only my father, the king, but all the subjects have also conquered attachment." As the rishi didn't believe this, the prince asked the rishi if he would like to help him carry out a test. The rishi asked for the prince's shirt, giving him something else to wear. The rishi then killed an animal and dipped the prince's shirt in its blood. He then went into the city, crying out that the prince had been killed by a lion. (In some

stories it is a tiger.) The people in the city said, "So, what if he's gone? He's gone. Why are you crying? That was his part in the drama. He must have had an account with nature." The rishi thought that the prince was not in favour with the subjects and that they didn't want him to become king and so that was why they reacted in that way.

He went on to the palace and told the story to the prince's brother and sister. They responded in the same manner, saying that there was no need to cry. "He was our brother. Now he is somebody else's brother and we are not going to be together forever. It was our part to be his brother and sister at this time. There is no need to cry. We just have to send peaceful vibrations to the soul." The rishi thought that the sister reacted like this because she preferred the other brother and that the brother was happy that now he would be the one to inherit the kingdom. He decided it was dislike which caused the prince's brother and sister not to have attachment.

So he went and told the story to the father of the prince who said, "The soul is eternal and imperishable. So there is no need to cry. He was my son and I thought he was going to be crown prince. It wasn't destined for him to be the crown prince and so the other one will inherit the kingdom. I cannot bring him back. If the soul is gone, it is gone. So why spread sorrow? Spread peaceful, powerful vibrations instead." In this way he gave him spiritual knowledge. The rishi thought that surely there must be some conflict there also and so he went and told the same story to the mother who also gave him spiritual knowledge.

Thinking that all the family members must bear grudges against the prince, the rishi went to the prince's wife, believing that he would get a different reaction from her. The wife asked the rishi where he came from, because nobody in her kingdom cries when a soul leaves its body, as there is no need to. She told him that the prince's part was over, saying that the prince had been very happy that he had been chosen to become the crown prince but that obviously this had not been in his fortune. The rishi then informed her that he had come to test her and all the others, and that the prince had not really died. He said that he had done this because he couldn't believe that they had all conquered attachment. Then the prince came back and everything went on as usual and he became king.

The spiritual idea behind this story is that anyone who conquers attachment will become an emperor and claim the throne. The reason for which he was able to claim the kingdom was that he was attached to no one and no one was attached to him. So, not only should we not have any attachment, but also others should not have any attachment to us. Then only can we become the masters of the world, world emperors.

KHUDADOST Friends of God

The present age is known as the beneficial confluence age, the time when everyone has an opportunity to perform good actions for future rewards. All are encouraged to make as much effort as possible in their spiritual development.

This is the story of a king who sat on a bridge and allowed the first passer-by who crossed the bridge to rule the kingdom. That person was given full freedom to decide how the kingdom was to be ruled. The only condition was that the person could rule for one day only.

One ruler was a cobbler. He was very money-oriented. So, when he ruled the kingdom, he converted all the currency into leather. The next day, however, this proved to be an utter waste and of no use whatsoever.

Another person, a farmer, also had the opportunity to rule the kingdom for one day. The farmer built a palace for himself and encouraged people to sow seeds for agriculture so that they would have a very good harvest for the next season. There were two benefits in the actions taken by the farmer when he was ruling the kingdom. Firstly, he had built a palace for himself and had registered it in his own name so that the following day, although he was no longer a king, the palace remained in his possession. In this way he had created a fortune for himself. Secondly, the farmer had also created a fortune for the others. He had encouraged all his subjects to plough the land and sow seeds for the future harvesting season. What one normally does in six months had been done in one day. He had shown how wise he was.

The spiritual significance of this story is that Baba, our Friend, is standing on the bridge which symbolises the confluence age, the end of the iron age and the beginning of the golden age. We souls are now passing

from the iron age to the golden age. The story tells us that the fortune of the future lies in our own hands. If we are friends of God (khudadost), we can also be friends to ourselves. It depends on what we want, whether to waste our time in body-consciousness, like the cobbler who could think of nothing but his leather, or whether we would like to create the fortune for others, like the farmer who encouraged others to sow seeds for the harvest, or even create the fortune of self-sovereignty for the self, again like the farmer who built a palace in his own name. The kingdom was handed over only for a short period of one day. The confluence age is also a short period of time in which we can create our future fortune by using godly knowledge and all the resources available wisely.

KUMBHAKARNA

Kumbhakarna, the brother of Ravan, is another character mentioned in the Ramayana. His name literally means 'pitcher-eared'. He is very well-known for his ability to sleep, sleeping for six months of the year and staying awake for six months. It is said that when he breathed, storms arose on the face of the earth. When Rama attacked Ravan in Lanka, Ravan sent messengers to wake up Kumbhakarna. It took them hours to shake him from his slumber. He joined the fray in Lanka, beating Sugriva but was defeated by Rama, who cut off his head.

Kumbhakarna's name refers to one whose ears, karna, are like pitchers, kumbha. If you speak into a pitcher, the sound of the voice will reverberate inside but the message will not be transmitted. Similarly, when God's knowledge of the Creator and the creation falls on deaf ears and people ignore the warning that world destruction is at hand, such people are veritable Kumbhakarnas.

The period of half a year's sleep and half a year's wakefulness refers to the two halves of the cycle. In the copper and iron ages we were without knowledge and during the golden and silver ages we were enlightened souls. Kumbhakarna is also shown as a gigantic figure. This is a symbolic representation of the many important people in the world today who, unable to grasp this knowledge, will wake up from the sleep of ignorance only at the end.

THE MAHABHARATA

The Mahabharata is the story that relates the history of the kings of India. The Supreme Soul has defined the word 'Bharat' as 'fulfilment' and in early times there was definitely nothing lacking in India. The theme of the following story also relates to this concept of abundance.

Once upon a time there was a king who had a son called Bharat after whom the country was named. In Bharat there was plenty of gold and diamonds and the country was rich in culture and arts. Those who were courageous and brave could become kings. From the community emerged a courageous prince called Shantanu, who was later throned as king. King Shantanu then had a son, whom he called Bhisma Shantavana.

Bhisma was said to be a son of the Ganges. This signified that he had a spiritual birth and so was a child of God. In his old age King Shantanu fell in love with Princess Satyawati but she refused to marry him because her son would only be second in line for the succession. Bhisma had such a noble character that he vowed never to become king so that his father could marry his beloved princess. Bhisma took the following oath, "I'll remain pure from birth and never marry and I'll devote my whole life to maintaining good conditions in this country. I'll look after my country, my kingdom, so that it will not be harassed and things will stay as they are." So he took an oath that he would lead a celibate life. Even today the oath of Bhisma, Bhismapratigya, is remembered. When somebody takes a very strong oath, then it is called the promise of Bhisma, Bhismapitama. The oath taken by Bhisma is a memorial of the oath taken by Raja Yogis to work towards a perfect world.

Bhishma's half-brother (who was born from the marriage of his father with Satyawati) had three sons. One was Dritharashtra, who was born blind, another was Pandu, who was very pale and had a physical disability, and the third one was Vidhura, who became adviser to the King. Because of Dritharashtra's blindness, Pandu was made king. King Pandu had two wives and five sons. In reality, those sons were sons of gods. The sons of Pandu were known as the Pandavas and the sons of the blind Dritharashtra as the Kauravas. The spiritual significance behind this is that the five Pandavas understood shrimat (God's directions) and they followed shrimat at all times.

The five Pandavas were Yudhisthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Yudhisthira symbolises one who is honest. Bhima symbolises one who is courageous, confident and enthusiastic. Arjuna symbolises one who takes initiative, one who is totally focussed, one who is surrendered, one who knows all secrets of God, one who makes God as his companion. Nakula symbolises one who is creative and has acquired a planning intellect. Sahadeva symbolises one who is cooperative at every step.

Kunti, the mother of Yudhisthira, Bhima and Arjuna, gave birth to them after receiving boons from the lord of the wind and Indra, respectively. Baba has told us in the murli that He is Yudhisthira, while Bhima represents the subtle, avyakt or angelic form of Baba's children which is why he is said to have been born from the boon of the wind-god. Of the five, Arjuna was the most gifted. He was the best warrior in defeating Maya and also in following the supreme directions of God.

Pandu's half-brother, Dhritarashtra, had a hundred sons, who were called the Kauravas. Even though there were one hundred of them, they were not as powerful as the Pandavas. They were the sons of the blind Dhritarashtra, which means symbolically that they were blind to God's directions and only followed the directions of their blind father, who was ignorant, greedy and very attached to his children. The father seldom pondered on how to uplift society nor saw to the well-being of the kingdom. He thought only of the well-being of his children. The wife of their blind father was called Gandhari. Gandhari usually put a small cloth over her eyes, blindfolding herself, although she had the capacity to see if she wanted to. Therefore, both Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, the mother and father

of the Kauravas, are the symbols of greed and attachment. The Supreme Soul very often says in His godly versions, the murli, that the children of the blind father are themselves blind.

The Mahabharata tells of the battle between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. During their childhood they were brought up together and they had a guru to educate them. One of the Pandavas, Arjuna, was in the habit of getting up early. He would then go quickly to the guru's house to listen to his sermon and was always the first to arrive. Being very obedient, he would accept the guru's directions wholeheartedly. For these reasons Arjuna became the instrument and it was in his chariot that God came. Symbolically, the chariot means the body. Brahma Baba was the first Arjuna and it was into his body that the Supreme Soul incarnated to reveal the true Gita.

All the Pandavas had urns and they were supposed to fill them with water and take them to the guru's house. So the Pandavas used to go and bathe in the river. After bathing, they would fill their urns with water, ready to go to their guru's house. Arjuna used to choose an urn with a wide mouth so that he could fill it up quickly and go to his guru's class early in order to take full benefit of the knowledge shared by his guru. This means that those who get ready to go to class quickly will be able to listen to all of God's teachings, which the other students who come late won't be able to hear. Therefore, Arjuna was a very clever student. He learnt a lot from the guru, who represents the Supreme Father, and this is why he became number one.

Pandu retired early to the forest to do penance for it was said that his paleness was leprosy. He was followed there by his two wives. Unfortunately, he died while his sons were still young children, so Dhritarashtra took them into his palace and brought them up as his own. They were taught the arts of war by Drona and Balarama.

When Dhritarashtra appointed Yudhisthira, the eldest son of the late King Pandu, as heir apparent (yuvaraja), his own sons were jealous and their hatred led ultimately to the great war. The Kauravas illegally took control of the throne and the king of the Kauravas told the Pandavas that it would be better if they were to go elsewhere for a time and come back later to reclaim the kingdom. Being obedient to the seniors, the Pandavas decided to go and live in the forest in a fine wooden house but even there they

could not escape the anger of their cousins. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas, set fire to the house but the Pandavas had been forewarned by their paternal uncle, Vidhura.

Many of the stories included in this collection are memorials of events which literally took place in the Brahma Kumaris' yagya during the confluence age. When the fire broke out, Bhima, one of the Pandavas, who was very healthy and strong, carried his younger brother on his shoulders. His younger brother used to have visions and was able to go into trance. He was also able to tell about the future but not until someone actually asked him about it. Bhima asked, "Oh, brother, is there a way out of here?" Now that he had been asked, the younger brother was able to say, "Yes, it is just under your foot." Then Bhima asked, "Why didn't you say that earlier?" and his brother answered, "This blessing is such that I can't say anything without someone asking first." The Pandavas then escaped and disappeared into the forest where they disguised themselves as beggars. Similarly, we have God's trance messengers here, who can only ask the Supreme Soul for a message for His children, when directed to do so by the seniors.

One day the Pandavas heard of the swayamvara that was being planned by King Drupada for his daughter Draupadi. Draupadi had her birth through the yagya, the sacrificial fire, just as they had. They decided to go and compete for the princess with the other princes. Arjuna won the beautiful bride, Draupadi but, when he told his mother that he had brought a gift home, she said that he must share it with all his brothers to demonstrate the unity among them. Being very obedient, Arjuna respected his mother's words and shared Draupadi with all the Pandavas.

Now that the Pandavas had appeared again, Dhritarashtra summoned them to his court and divided the kingdom into two halves: Hastinapura, which would be ruled by Duryodhana, and Indraprasth, now part of greater Delhi, which would be the Pandavas' capital. Yudhisthira enlarged his kingdom considerably and a very beautiful palace was also constructed by the Pandavas. They had commissioned Maya, an architect from the country, to build this palace. When the Kauravas visited it, they were so astonished by it that Draupadi laughed at them. This made them, especially the eldest, more angry and more jealous than ever. Yudhisthira then started making plans for the Rajasuya sacrifice, which would make him emperor.

These plans aroused the envy and hatred of the Kauravas even further. They had an uncle, Shakuni, who was the most dishonest man in the kingdom and an expert at throwing dice. Together they persuaded their father to invite the Pandavas for a game. Reluctant to play the game, Yudhisthira only joined in to show proper respect for his senior uncle. He lost his kingdom, the freedom of his brothers, of himself and also that of Draupadi. When Draupadi was told that she was now a slave, she tried to run away but Dushashan, brother of Duryodhana, caught up with her and dragged her back to the court by her hair. He then started to disrobe her but a miracle happened: the sari he tried to pull from her body seemed to have no end. It just kept on unravelling.

There were many instances in the Mahabharata where God helped Draupadi. She was a powerful woman, a shakti, and Baba often refers to her in the murlis. He tells us that we are that same Draupadi, the courageous one. It was she who inspired the Pandavas to fight against the injustice perpetrated against them by the Kauravas. Spared the ultimate humiliation of being completely disrobed, Draupadi was given three boons by King Dhritarashtra but she asked only for the return of Yudhisthira and his four brothers. Dhritarashtra, however, persuaded his sons that the Pandavas should be given back their freedom, their wife and their kingdom. Finally, they decided to play one more dice game for the kingdom, the loser of which would have to go into exile for twelve years and stay in hiding for one year after that. Yudhisthira lost and the Pandavas departed once more for the forest.

The Pandavas lived in the forest for twelve years. In the thirteenth year they entered the service of the King of Virata, Yudhisthira disguised as a Brahmin, Bhima as a cook, Arjuna as a music teacher, Nakula as a horse-trainer and Sahadeva as a cowherd. Draupadi called herself Sudeshna and became the queen's lady-in-waiting. One of the generals in command at that time tried to take away her chastity but he was killed by Bhima. This interlude in the life of the Pandavas symbolically represents the time in the iron age when the Brahmins are incognito and are separated from each other, before coming back to Baba's home to regain their lost kingdom.

Finally the Pandavas' days of servitude came to an end and they decided to reclaim their kingdom. Krishna, being a cousin of both the parties, was

sent as envoy to ask for the Pandavas' half of the kingdom. The King of Virata joined forces with them in order to help them destroy the Kauravas. Krishna offered Arjuna and Duryodhana a choice: one would get his army, the other would have Krishna himself as his ally. Duryodhana opted for Krishna's army, preferring to remain commander-in-chief himself.

Arjuna asked to have Krishna on his side, a wise choice, because having God on his side won the war for him. Arjuna became the commander-in-chief of the Pandava army, Krishna preferring the humble position of being his charioteer. Spiritually, Krishna represents the Supreme Soul, God Shiva. On the morning before the battle he recited to Arjuna the famous poem, the Bhagavad Gita, to reconcile Arjuna to the war. Morning symbolises the confluence age. As the war was about to start, Arjuna refused to fight his cousins but God encouraged him to fight as a warrior and taught him about yoga and how to become a conqueror of attachment.

The Kaurava army was at first led by their uncle Bhishma until Arjuna killed him with a thousand arrows. Then Drona became commander, after him Karna and finally Shalya, King of Madra. Bhishma and Karna represent the leaders of the other religions who will come back again at the end to lead their followers back home to Paramdham. The battle lasted for eighteen days, at the end of which, apart from Duryodhana, only three of the one hundred Kauravas were still alive.

At the end of the battle on the last day a terrible fight took place between the good but irascible Bhima and Duryodhana. Bhima had already killed Dushashan. Now it was Duryodhana's turn. After a long battle Duryodhana fell, seriously wounded. Yudhishthira prevented Bhima from killing him, saying that only a coward would do so. However, the surviving Kauravas were cowards. They sneaked secretly into the Pandavas' camp at night and killed the five sons of Draupadi, still young boys, in their sleep. Thus, she also was terribly punished for her pride. This signifies that at the end those who return to Paramdham will be punished by Dharamraj for all sinful actions which have not been burnt away through the power of yoga and also for any of the vices that are still present within them at that time.

The five Pandava brothers ultimately attained victory. Even though the Kauravas had a huge army, with many weapons and worldly powers, the Pandavas won the battle with spiritual power, as God was on their side.

They returned to the capital of Hastinapura where Yudhishthira was crowned maharaja. There they lived in peace and prosperity. However, Yudhishthira was filled with remorse over the massacre of his family, since his weakness for gambling had led to all the killing. He decided to make a pilgrimage to heaven, to Indra's palace on Mount Meru. Naturally his four faithful younger brothers followed him because they had all shared the preceding days of adventure and peace, sadness and greatness. Draupadi went with them for she too had many reasons to propitiate the gods and she had always been ready for adventure. Arjuna's grandson, Parikshit, remained behind as maharaja of Hastinapura. Baba has said that some of us will go ahead as the 'advance party' to allow the deities to come and take control of the new world as masters. This episode in the life of the Pandavas symbolically represents that event.

The long, exhausting journey of the Pandava princes, climbing the Himalayas to the palace of the gods, is another epic, contained in the seventeenth book of the Mahabharata. This represents the journey to Paramdham, the soul world. In this long episode accounts are rendered of what each of these formidable characters had done and why they had failed. Their defects of character and morality proved fatal for them. Draupadi was the first to fall. She still loved Arjuna with undiminished love but her pride could not face the long pilgrimage. Sahadeva, too, was full of pride, vanity and self-love, so he too fell. Nakula fell next. He was too full of his own physical beauty to possess the grim persistence needed for the arduous pilgrimage. Next Arjuna fell by the wayside because his boasting had always been greater than his achievements. He had once vowed that he would destroy all his enemies, but it was too late. The last to fall along the way was the strong, but easily angered, Bhima. He had cursed too many people instead of being a simple honest warrior. Alone with his dog, the persevering Yudhishthira reached the gate of Indra's heaven. He agreed to enter, only after insisting that his four brothers and Draupadi should be admitted with him. This section of the Gita implies that the ascent to heaven means the continual effort of imbibing divine attributes, practising yoga and attaining victory over the vices, lying hidden in their subtle form in the human mind. This effort of attaining heaven is compared to climbing a high mountain such as the Himalaya. The "dog" actually signifies the reverse, "God", who is our one and only faithful Companion on this path of spiritual journey.

The Mahabharata contains long philosophical chapters, all in verse, including treatises on law, morality and virtue, religion and politics, medicine and many other subjects. The Mahabharata confirms what Baba has always been telling us, which is that the kingdom will pass from the Kauravas to the Pandavas. Baba has also told us that we are the Pandavas, the spiritual guides. Yet we have to endure many hardships. If we have unshakeable faith in one Baba and no one else, victory is guaranteed.

Signs from the Mahabharata that Signify the End of the Iron Age (Kaliyug)

- (i) Politics will be without principles.
- (ii) Law will be without love.
- (iii) Business will be without ethics. (There will be corruption and blackmarketeering.)
- (iv) Physical pleasures will be indulged in to the extreme.
- (v) There will be no respect for seniors nor love for juniors.
- (vi) Science will be used for the destruction of humanity.
- (vii) Irreligiousness will go under the name of religion.
- (viii) Bhakti will be filled with blind faith and devotion.
- (ix) Bodily fashions will be taken to the extreme.
- (x) Edible items will be sold in small packets.
- (xi) Milk will be sold in bottles.
- (xii) Unmarried girls will choose their own husbands.
- (xiii) Families will become dysfunctional and will not carry out their responsibilities.
- (xiv) There will be no purity between brother and sister, mother and son, father and daughter.
- (xv) Human beings will eat human beings.
- (xvi) Untimely death will result in wandering spirits.
- (xvii) The weather and the seasons will be unpredictable.

To protect its religion the Brahmin clan should:

- (a) study and teach spiritual knowledge;
- (b) wake up at Brahm Murat, i.e. Amrit Vela, and do tapasya;
- (c) eat Brahma Bhojan (pure food);
- (d) protect the sacrificial fire(yagya) themselves and encourage others to keep the fire burning
- (e) practise brahmacharya

MEERA

The story of Meera is very famous in the history of Rajasthan, a state situated in the north-west of India. Her story is a true account of her devotion to Krishna. Today she is widely worshipped and many of the hymns that she wrote telling of her love for Krishna are still sung.

Meera was the youngest daughter of a king and all her sisters were married. One day at the age of eight, having seen a marriage procession, she asked her mother, "Who will be my bridegroom?" "Here," said her mother, light-heartedly pointing at a small statue of Krishna. "Take him for a husband." Little did her mother know that from that moment onwards Meera engaged herself to Krishna and considered herself married to him. Meera took the statue and placed it in her room, after which she prayed to Krishna day and night, sang hymns to him and washed his statue regularly.

In time her parents arranged for her marriage into a royal family. So immense was her love for Krishna that she told her new husband, "You are not my husband. My parents might have selected you for me but I am already married to Krishna." Fortunately, her husband understood her devotion and still loved her. She lived a life of simplicity in the palace and in every activity she saw Krishna in front of her. She would constantly sing and dance in remembrance of Krishna. Her father-in-law, however, and her husband, who had to obey his family's wishes no matter how much he loved Meera, still considered it a disgrace to the family that she wouldn't acknowledge her marriage and so they attempted to torture her into complying with their wishes. Not succeeding in this, they finally sent her a poisoned drink. Because Meera loved Krishna more than her life, she drank the contents, even though she was aware of the poison in it. The

story goes that her love was so immense that the poison turned into nectar. One day as Meera was walking in her garden, praying to Krishna, the real god appeared to her and at once her soul left her body.

For Hindu mystics this sad tale has joyful connotations, even though the kind king mourned his wife for the rest of his life. Beautiful songs are still sung in India to celebrate Meera's love for God, a love so complete and all-consuming that her soul had no attachment to this world and cleaved to God as soon as she saw him. She is also considered to be the main female devotee. Her love for her lord was so great that she endured all manner of hardships with ease. In other words, she made a mountain into a molehill.

MIDAS

Long ago there was a king whose name was Midas. He was extremely rich but not at all content, as he still wanted more. Obsessed with accumulating gold, he thought that the more he had the happier he would be. One day while dreaming, he woke up with a start to find a fairy standing in front of him.

He got up from his bed, fell at the feet of the fairy and said, "What a beautiful fairy you are!" Then, suddenly realising how he might turn this visit to his own advantage, he slyly added, "I have heard that beautiful fairies like you often grant people's wishes."

The fairy laughed loudly. "Oh, King Midas! Tell me your wish and I will grant it to you." Overwhelmed at the prospect of such good fortune, the king was surprised and unable to speak. "Tell me, Midas," the fairy asked again, "what do you want?" The king's lips trembled in joyful anticipation. He shouted, "Oh, fairy! Grant me the power to turn everything I touch into gold." Once his wish was granted, the king did not know what to do with himself. He paced up and down, looking at his hands. He said to himself, "I have great powers now and with the help of these hands I will accumulate so much gold."

Slowly he moved towards a stone lying in front of him. He held his hands near the stone, saying, "Let me touch it and see what happens." The king touched the stone and it did indeed turn into gold. He jumped for joy. For some time he continued to gaze at it in wonder and then, seeing a beautiful rose, he touched it, whereupon it also turned into shining gold.

The king grew quite excited. He ran to the garden, touching many flowers and plants. "How wonderful! Everything I have touched has turned into gold. I shall be the richest king in the whole world. What a lucky man I am!"

After some time King Midas began to feel hungry. He called his servant and said, "Bring me food and drink." The servant brought a bowl of fruit and other delicacies. He also brought a jug of water. The king wanted to eat a piece of fruit but, when he picked it up, it turned into gold. He wanted to drink the water but alas, he could not, because the moment he touched the jug, it turned into gold. The king sank back in his seat and cried aloud, "What a fool I've been! I am hungry but I am not able to eat anything. I am thirsty and I am not able to drink. What a disaster! This will be the death of me."

At that moment his daughter came into the room. Seeing her father sitting in such a sorrowful mood, she came running up to him and said, "Oh, father! What is wrong with you? Why are you so sad?" "Oh, my child!" cried Midas. Suddenly his hand touched her, changing her instantly into a golden statue. Seeing this, the king broke down and wept. "Now I cannot even talk to my daughter. What have I done? She has turned into a statue." His sorrow knew no bounds.

At that point the fairy appeared in front of him. "Oh, king!" she said. "You should be very happy but I find you crying. Why? Are you not satisfied with your powers to turn everything into gold?" The king fell at her feet. "Please do not mock me. I do not want this power any more. Please take it away! I want my daughter to come back to life again. Be assured that I will not ask for such a boon again. Never again will I be so greedy. I have enough gold. I will use this gold to help the poor and needy." The fairy then took away from King Midas the power of the golden touch, bringing his daughter instantly back to life. The king was very happy. From that moment on he was forever freed from his insatiable greed.

The moral of this story is that one should not be greedy. Greedy people will never be happy. Only those who are contented, can be happy. The story teaches us to be contented with whatever we have, the spiritual significance being that in the golden age everything will be gold and diamonds. There will be plenty of wealth in paradise.

NALA AND DAMAYANTI

The story of Nala and Damayanti is told as an episode in the Mahabharata. Nala and Damayanti lived happily together for some time, a son and daughter being born to them. However, Nala was enticed into gambling with Pushkara, who used loaded dice. Nala lost his kingdom as well as his wife and children and he wandered off as a pauper. After various adventures he and Damayanti were reunited. He set about learning how to play properly with the dice and then challenged Pushkara to a return match, in which he recovered all he had lost.

This is a moral tale about what happens when one does not give due consideration to one's primary duty of protecting one's wife and children. However, it also tells us how it was his wife's virtue and persistence which in the end led to a happy reunion. The story demonstrates the importance of the role of a householder.

The land of the Nishadhas was ruled by the handsome and strong King Nala. This young king possessed uncommon skills as a warrior, was a masterful horseman and loved the game of dice. He outshone all other kings in his generosity to holy men and in the way he upheld the religious traditions of his ancestors. He was endowed with all the good qualities of manhood. No man alive could match the wisdom, might and goodness of King Nala.

In the nearby kingdom of Vidarbha there lived a young princess named Damayanti. Her qualities of beauty and virtue matched those of Nala, and when the time came for Damayanti to choose her husband, even the gods of heaven came, hoping to be chosen by this pretty maiden. In spite of the divine competition, Nala was chosen by Damayanti to be her husband. It seemed the perfect marriage had been sealed.

As the gods returned home from Nala and Damayanti's wedding they encountered the evil god, Kali, who was on the way to Damayanti's husband-choosing ceremony, hoping to gain her hand in marriage. When he heard the ceremony had already taken place and that King Nala had been chosen, the evil Kali vowed to disrupt this perfect marriage. Though the other celestial beings told Kali that Nala would prevail in the end, the angry god vowed revenge.

For twelve years Nala and Damayanti lived in perfect harmony and love in accordance with their virtuous qualities. Then one morning Nala gave the evil Kali the opening he'd been looking for. Forgetting to wash his feet before beginning his morning prayers (a breach in ritual preparation), Nala was immediately possessed by the spirit of Kali.

In a weakened moral and intellectual state Nala accepted the greedy king Pushkara's challenge to gamble. Aided by Kali, Pushkara sought to debase and dethrone Nala through a fateful game of dice.

The widely publicised game began, even though Damayanti and citizens of Nishadha tried to dissuade Nala from playing with the infamous Pushkara. Nala insisted that he could not refuse a public challenge, especially as it had been witnessed by his own wife. As the game of dice began behind the closed doors of Nala's palace, the influence of Kali was immediately apparent. Nala lost one fateful roll after another. First, his gold and silver were lost, then one by one all his material possessions. Nala's chariots and horses, his cows, his granaries, and finally, even his royal robes were all lost to Pushkara. Though Damayanti, the court ministers and the citizens of his kingdom all pleaded with him to stop the game, Nala persisted until he had gambled away his entire kingdom. Then Pushkara insisted Nala offer Damayanti as a final prize but Nala refused. Since Nala had nothing left to wager, Pushkara threw him out of the palace and banished him from his former realm.

Wandering in the forest with only one piece of cloth to wear and with his wife dutifully at his side, Nala looked for roots and berries on which he and his wife could survive. Days passed, and the former king and queen both grew lean from hunger. One day Nala happened to come upon a small flock of birds that were unaware of his presence and he saw a chance for a meat dinner. He removed his single piece of cloth and threw it over the birds as a makeshift fowler's net. The frightened birds took flight with

Nala's only garment in tow. The debasement of the virtuous former king was now complete as he stood naked in the forest.

Later, Nala and Damayanti collapsed from fatigue and hunger in an abandoned hut. During the night, Nala awoke, cut off part of Damayanti's garment to cover himself and, leaving his devoted wife asleep in the hut, set out alone through the forest. Twice he returned to the hut and twice he departed again, convincing himself that his beautiful wife would be better off without him. He reasoned that a maiden of her virtue would be protected from any danger the forest or its inhabitants could offer. He said to himself, "Should I desert my wife? Truly she is devoted to me and would suffer much distress on account of my actions. However, freed of me, she may return to her relatives and enjoy once again the royal circumstances she deserves. If I do not leave her, Damayanti's devotion to me will only cause her further pain and suffering." So Nala abandoned Damayanti who continued her exhausted sleep.

As morning approached, Damayanti awoke to find Nala gone. Crying out in anguish, Damayanti sobbed, "Oh, my lord! Oh, my dearest husband, why have you deserted me? Illustrious prince, if you are truthful and virtuous, how then can you desert me while I'm asleep in this fearful forest? I have been faithful to you and have done you no wrong. Why then have you abandoned your husbandly duty of protection? I am so afraid! Please cease your terrible game and show yourself to me!" With these words Damayanti fell down sobbing at her predicament. After it became clear that Nala was not going to return, Damayanti set out in search of her husband.

While searching for Nala, Damayanti ventured even deeper into the forest and encountered a huge serpent which coiled itself around her. Once again Damayanti called out to Nala for protection. A passing hunter heard her cries and came to her rescue. After killing the snake, he learnt of Damayanti's plight. Tempted by her beauty and her defencelessness, the hunter attempted to force himself on her. Calling upon her accumulated virtue, Damayanti cursed the hunter and he fell dead from the power of her words. As Damayanti wandered further into the dark woods, she encountered one frightening situation after another until she finally came upon a caravan. Joining the caravan in the hope of getting out of the forest, Damayanti was welcomed by the merchants who pitied the near-starved woman.

The caravan leaders decided to stop for the night by a serene lake. As they set up camp along the shoreline, they were unaware that they were bedding down on the only route of access by which animals could approach the lake to drink and bathe. During the night a large elephant herd charged the sleeping caravan, enraged at this obstacle in their path. Many deaths and injuries were the result of the elephants' charge through the sleeping camp. As the caravan leaders regrouped their remaining people and animals, they blamed their misfortune on their new travelling companion, Damayanti. Accused of being a witch or female demon in disguise, Damayanti was again abandoned in the forest and left to find her own way.

After months of travelling alone, surviving only on the berries and roots she could find, Damayanti emerged from the forest, a mere skeleton. Coming upon a great city, Damayanti was taken in by the queen of that city and nursed back to health. Search parties of soldiers and priests were dispatched to seek Damayanti's possessed husband. Through one of the priests who had recently returned from a distant city Damayanti learned that her husband had also encountered many hardships and had been deformed by a snake bite. Using the strategy of a second husband-choosing ceremony, Damayanti enticed Nala to come to the city in which she now lived. She asked Nala (now in the guise of Vahuka, a charioteer) what she had done to deserve being abandoned in the forest. Nala replied, "Oh, frail one, neither the loss of my kingdom nor my abandonment of you were my acts. Both were due to Kali. I was possessed by that evil one and forced by him to perform all those evil deeds which led to your suffering. That evil one has now left me and I am here to reclaim your hand." Damayanti reaffirmed her original choice of Nala and, as Nala put on royal robes again, his disfiguration disappeared.

Let us reflect on the spiritual significance of the story. Nala and Damayanti lived happily together for some time, and a son and daughter were born to them. This signifies that they were originally golden-aged souls who lived with prosperity, health and happiness. However, Nala was lured into gambling by Pushkara, who cheated by using loaded dice. Nala lost his kingdom, wife and children and he wandered off, a pauper. Being forced to wander in the forest signifies coming down from the sovereignty of heaven into hell, which exists from the copper age onwards. Even there he began to lose the only material wealth he had left. This signifies that one

loses everything and reaches degradation by performing sins, that is, by falling under the influence of the five vices in the iron age. The queen who helped Damayanti represents God Shiva and the priest who helped to restore her husband's health symbolises God's messenger. After various adventures Nala and Damayanti were reunited. He then learnt how to play effectively with dice and challenged Pushkara, from whom he recovered all he lost. This signifies that, after having found God, we know how to handle Maya, the five vices, and how not to allow ourselves to be deceived.

NARAD

Narad was a famous sage, a rishi. He was said to have been born from Brahma's forehead. Known in India as a player of the tambura, he taught the Gandharvas to play music. This character appears in many bhakti stories, quite humorously at times. Being the son of Brahma, he could travel to any of the three worlds at any time. Narad had great love for God and would encourage souls to speak about God at every opportunity. However, he developed a bad habit of gossiping. The following story tells of Narad wanting to marry Lakshmi.

Narad once decided to do austere penances in order to control all his emotions and desires. Upon seating himself in the conducive setting of a great hermitage, Narad began his yogic practice. He sat for days in silence, keeping his mind free of impure thoughts. The very throne of Indra, lord of gods, became agitated by the heat generated by Narad's austerities. Indra sent some beautiful maidens to tempt Narad but Narad remained unmoved.

Considering his penance to be complete and thinking he had thoroughly overcome all desires, Narad ceased his penances and left the hermitage. Puffed up by pride in his ascetic achievements, Narad set off to the abode of Shiva in heaven, then to Brahma's and to Vishnu's abodes to brag of his newly acquired holiness. Concerned at Narad's arrogance in thinking himself to be above such desires and emotions, the gods planned a test of Narad's ascetic achievements. (Spiritually speaking, the abode of Shiva in heaven refers to the soul world and the other abodes refer to the subtle region, the abode of Brahma, Vishnu and Shankar.)

As he made his way back to earth from heaven, a city more beautiful than heaven itself was placed in Narad's path. The king who lived in this

city was preparing to hold a husband-choosing ceremony for his daughter, Shrimati, (Lakshmi) in which she could select her own husband. As Narad approached the palace of the king, the king's daughter came to wait upon the venerable sage. Narad was struck dumb by the princess's beauty. Narad ran to Vishnu's heavenly abode and begged Vishnu, the handsome god, to bestow his godly form upon him to secure his chances of being chosen by the pretty maiden. Vishnu told him to go to the palace and said that he would do what was beneficial for him, just as a physician does what is good for his patients. Thereupon, Vishnu blessed the sage with his godly form and the face of Hari. (Hari is another name of Vishnu which means both 'charming' and 'monkey'.) Thus, according to this play on words, the sage, Narad, set off to the husband-choosing ceremony with the body of a god and the face of a monkey.

Narad hurried to the palace where the ceremony was to take place. Assembled there were scores of princes, all anxious to be chosen by the beautiful Lakshmi. Being unaware of how he appeared to others, Narad thought, "She will choose me since I am in Vishnu's form." Several of those attending the ceremony mocked Narad's appearance and laughed at his delusive pride. When Lakshmi came to Narad, she did not choose him, telling him to look at himself in a mirror. When he did so, he saw the face of a monkey. Feeling affronted by his arrogance, Lakshmi ran from the ceremony hall without choosing a husband.

In this story Narad is shown as a person who, even though he had love for God, also had excessive pride in himself, thinking that he had conquered all desires. When he was asked to look in the mirror, he saw the monkey's face, representing the vices, namely, ego, lust, attachment, anger and greed. The mirror also reflected the image of an ascetic who had not conquered desires. Baba often refers to Narad as one who should become worthy to go to golden age by removing the monkey-like vices and imbibing divine virtues.

In another story, God, who is Dharamraj, King of Righteousness, told him that there was one seat vacant in heaven. He asked Narad to go to hell, meaning the earth, the old world, and enquire if anyone would like to come to heaven. Narad was certain that everyone would like to go to heaven. Confidently he went to earth. He told various different people of the vacancy

in heaven. A student replied, "One seat where? One seat in the theatre?" A businessman said he would go to heaven if he could open a shop between heaven and hell so that every soul could become his customer. An officer enquired if he could still take bribes if he were to go there. A dying mother, who had been praying to God for salvation, said that she hadn't really meant it because she still had many obligations to fulfil to her family. Narad even asked some insects who lived in the filth if they were interested in going to heaven but was told that they could only survive in the filth. So Narad reported to Dharamraj that no one in hell wanted to go to heaven. All of them were attached to the things of hell. However, it was only when Dharamraj finally called the residents of hell to settle their karmic accounts that they realised that it was too late and so they repented.

THE PUNDIT WHO COULD NOT SWIM

In India it is a custom that, whenever something good happens, stories from the scriptures are read continuously for seven days. The stories are read both morning and night and people take leave from their work during that period. Once there was a pundit who narrated stories of Rama and Krishna to his audience. A pundit (pandit) is a scholar of the religious scriptures, a well-read and learned person who is a Brahmin by birth but not by practice.

Once the pundit narrated a story about a person who was able to cross the river because of his love-link with God. This story was much appreciated by the audience. Every day the pundit would be invited for lunch or dinner at someone's home. One day some women invited the pundit for dinner at their home and he agreed to go the following day after his talk. However, the next day it was raining heavily and the river was flooding. The women managed to get across the river by chanting the name given to them by the pundit. He had told them to chant "Ram, Ram, Ram". However, not daring to go across himself, the pundit remained standing, shivering under a tree. The women encouraged the pundit again and again to cross the river but he said, "No! Oh God, I can't go. If I go, I'll die. I'll be drowned." The women answered, "Oh, panditji, you told us the other day that if you have a love-link with God, you can go across the river. See! We did it."

Baba has said in the murlis that those who just speak knowledge theoretically but don't put it into practice are like pundits. Those who practise what they preach, having inculcated knowledge into their lives, are able to face any difficulties in life. Therefore, we need to know how to put the knowledge into practice in our everyday lives. The following is another story about such a pundit.

Once upon a time there were several men travelling in a boat on the Ganges. One of them was a pundit who was making a great show of his higher learning. He said that he had studied various books - among them the Vedas, the Vedanta and the six systems of philosophy. He asked a person sitting next to him, "Do you know the Vedanta?" "No, respected sir, I do not know about this," answered the passenger. Again the pundit asked, "Do you know the Sankhya and yoga?" "No, reverend sir, I don't." While the pundit was talking to him in this manner, the passenger sitting next to him kept silent. Suddenly a storm broke out and the boat began to sink. The passenger then said, "I don't know the Sankhya or yoga, either, sir, but I do know how to swim." The pundit did not know how to swim and so he was drowned.

This story likewise signifies that we have to be able to apply the spiritual knowledge in a practical way. This is why the passenger replied that, even though he didn't know the Sankhya or yoga, he did know how to swim.

THE RAMAYANA

The Ramayana is considered one of the greatest epic poems in the world and is attributed to the sage, Valmiki. It is the story of Rama. King Dasharath, Rama's father, had three wives. He divided a big pot of nectar among them - one portion to Sumitra, who gave birth to Lakshman; one portion to Kaushalya, who gave birth to Rama; and two portions to Kaikeyee, who gave birth to Bharata and Shatrughna. (In the scriptures of Bharat pure birth, that is, birth through yoga power, is quite often mentioned.)

One day Dasharath went hunting in a forest where a young boy called Shrivankumar was travelling on a pilgrimage with his blind parents. (Baba gives the title "Shrivankumar" to those who bring both their parents on the pilgrimage to Madhuban.) It was dusk and Dasharath shot at what he thought was a deer drinking at a pond. In fact, it was Shrivankumar that he had killed and, when he informed the parents of the boy's fate, they cursed him for killing their son. They said that he would suffer and die in the same way as they would, in great sorrow. (Spiritually, the 'curse' signifies the role of the law of karma.)

When Dasharath reached the age of retirement, his eldest son, Rama, was to take the throne. However, Kaikeyee's maidservant, who came from a clan of devils and had a jealous nature, persuaded Kaikeyee that Bharata should take the throne. To achieve this she suggested that Kaikeyee demand of Dasharath the fulfilment of two wishes he had once promised her. So Kaikeyee reminded the king of her two wishes: that Bharata should sit on the throne and that Rama should go into exile for fourteen years. Dasharath was shocked and remembered the curse given by Shrivankumar's parents years before. At first he would not grant his wife's wishes but Rama's sense

of honour and duty obliged him to uphold his promise. Rama went into the forest with his wife, Sita, and his devoted brother, Lakshman. ('Laksh' means 'aim', and Lakshman had single-minded devotion to Rama, who actually signifies God Shiva.)

Everyone in the kingdom was surprised at the announcement of Bharata's rise to the throne. Bharata, himself, was visiting relatives at the time and, when he returned to hear this news, he asked Rama to come back. Rama said that he was bound to honour his father's promise and so Bharata asked Rama for his wooden sandals (chapals) to place on the throne so that he could worship him in his absence. Spiritually, this signifies that Rama is actually ruling. In our spiritual life also all our activities are based on what God Shiva wants and, even though He is not physically present, His presence is felt as the main actor.

Ravan, the King of Lanka, had great occult powers. He was so powerful that he had total control over the elements of nature, including the vices. The four bedposts of his bed were earth, water, air and fire. Ravan had two lifelong wishes, which were to remain unfulfilled: to put fragrance into gold and to build a ladder to heaven. (Baba says that scientists today are trying to reverse the laws of nature, and that eventually the elements will take revenge.) Ravan's kingdom glittered with gold and was very beautiful but the people who lived there were devils and ugly, unhappy drunkards. This image symbolises the iron age.

Ravan had three brothers, Kumbhakarna, Meghnad and Vibhishan. 'Kumbh' means 'pitcher'; 'Karna' means 'ears'; thus 'Kumbhakarna' refers to those who listen to knowledge through one ear and let it out through the other - that is, they don't imbibe it. Kumbhakarna would sleep for six months of the year and in that time nothing could wake him - not even a herd of elephants walking over him! Meghnad means 'the thundering of clouds' and refers to how he would shout a lot but never do anything. Hence the saying, 'Clouds that thunder do not rain'. Meghnad was innocent but he was a devil nevertheless, because of his anger. Vibhishan was a great devotee of Rama. He had great love for Rama's valour, and he defected to Rama's army during the rescue of Sita. This signifies spiritually that God Shiva's knowledge was given to many souls in the iron-aged world and that they all responded in different ways.

Supnakha, Ravan's sister, saw Lakshman in the forest one day and fell in love with him. She came and asked him to marry her. Lakshman, seeing through her beautiful disguise, became angry at her lack of manners and chopped off her nose. She ran to Ravan and showed him what Lakshman had done to her, demanding that he take revenge. It is said that the whole Ramayana started as a result of this. Supnakha is an example of those who take knowledge, benefit from it and then get angry over something and leave Baba. Later they defame Baba and his service.

Ravan saw this as an opportunity to provoke an encounter with Rama. (Ravan was a strong devotee of Shiva, who had told him that he would receive salvation through Rama at a later time. A sage had come to Ravan and told him that to interfere in God's work would lead to his salvation.) Ravan decided to kidnap Sita, believing that Rama would come to him in search of her, and then through Rama he would find salvation. (This was a 'plus point' for Ravan - he only kidnapped Sita in order to attract Rama's attention; he didn't touch Sita while holding her as a hostage.)

Ravan had to devise a plan to kidnap Sita whereby Rama and Lakshman would leave Sita alone in the forest. The devil, Mareecha, owed him a favour, so Ravan asked him to manifest himself in the form of a golden deer and attract Sita's attention. (The deer represents illusion, the desire of the physical senses, that is, Maya). When Sita caught sight of the golden deer, she was so enthralled that she begged Rama to capture it so that she could play with it. This was her first weakness - a childish, stubborn nature. Even though Rama told her that it was Maya, she insisted that he go into the forest to find the deer for her. So Rama left Sita with Lakshman and went in search of the deer. This signifies how souls become body-conscious and leave God as a result.

Then Ravan called out in a voice that sounded like Rama in distress and Sita's second weakness was revealed - she couldn't discriminate between the voice of Rama and the voice of Ravan. She told Lakshman to go and help Rama, even though he pointed out to her that, as Rama was God, he could never get into trouble. Sita told Lakshman that if he didn't go, it meant that he lusted after her. This was her third weakness - ego and lack of faith in Rama. She lacked insight into the true nature of both of them. This also signifies a reduction in spirituality in the soul.

Reluctantly, Lakshman went in search of Rama but, before leaving, he drew a circle around the cottage in the forest where Sita was staying and forbade her to step outside this line of protection. (The line represents the code of conduct by which Baba gives protection to his children.) Seeing her alone, Ravan came by in the form of a beggar, seeking alms. Sita told him that she couldn't leave the circled area but she took pity on him and asked him to come inside. However, when the beggar tried to cross the line, flames ignited around the protective circle, preventing him from entering. Eventually, Sita felt so sorry for him that she brought the food he had requested. As soon as her foot crossed the line (Baba speaks about the foot of the intellect.), Ravan enchanted her and she began to fly. He summoned his flying donkey-chariot and they flew back to Lanka.

On the way to Lanka, an eagle-king passed Ravan and Sita and would not allow them to go any further. Ravan fought with the eagle, chopping off its wings and legs, leaving it to die. As Sita was borne through the air, she dropped her ornaments, one by one, as clues of her flight, leaving her with nothing but her ring. (This symbolises that, when the soul crosses the line of the copper age, it loses all its virtues.) When they arrived in Lanka, Ravan imprisoned her in the beautiful "ashok vatika", 'the cottage without sorrow'. (In the murlī Baba tells us that it is really "shok vatika", 'the cottage of sorrow', and that Ravan's kingdom extends over the entire world.) Although Ravan provided Sita with all earthly comforts and luxuries, nothing could please her and she kept crying out for Rama.

When Rama and Lakshman returned, Sita was nowhere to be found. Rama and Lakshman were walking in the forest, wondering how to find her, when Sugriva, an exiled monkey-king, saw them. He sent a general from his army, Hanuman, to approach them in the guise of a Brahmin and find out their business. As soon as Hanuman saw that it was Rama, he immediately resumed his monkey form, knowing that he couldn't present himself in a false manner to God. From that moment on he remained totally honest and faithful to Rama. Hanuman took Rama and Lakshman to Sugriva and a pledge of mutual help was made. In return for helping the exiled monkey-king to conquer his evil brother, Vali, Sugriva promised Rama the help of his huge monkey army to find and rescue Sita. In the ensuing battle Vali was killed and the monkey kingdom was united when Angad, Vali's son, pledged to support Sugriva.

Monkey armies were sent out in all four directions to search for the missing Sita. Before dying, the eagle-king, who had tried to stop Ravan, told them what had happened. Hanuman found the ornaments that Sita had dropped, and the vulture-king, a friend of the eagle, used his sharp eyesight to locate where Sita was imprisoned. Hanuman was the strongest of all the monkeys and so he was chosen to leap from India across to Lanka and bring back some proof for Rama that Sita was indeed held hostage there.

Hanuman's specialty was that he could make himself larger or smaller in a second. He sat on the shore and, as he chanted "Ram, Ram", he grew bigger and bigger. Taking a mighty spring, Hanuman began to fly. (As the son of the wind, Hanuman is always shown in bhakti pictures, flying in great intoxication.) This signifies how we can do service in a subtle form. As he flew, a sea monster emerged from the ocean saying, "You cannot go any further unless you enter my mouth." Hanuman responded by making his form larger and larger so that the sea monster had to open his mouth wider and wider. The instant Hanuman entered the monster's mouth he reduced his size to a pinpoint and flew right out. The monster was pleased with his cleverness and acknowledged that he had passed the test. (The significance of this is that we have to become very small, a point, to conquer Maya. The point refers to the form of the soul and Baba, and to putting a full stop to the past, to incidents which have taken place in the drama.)

Intoxicated in Rama's remembrance, Hanuman landed in Ravan's kingdom and assumed his small form again. A guard who saw him was startled because it was said that a monkey on the island of Lanka was a sign of the end of the kingdom. Hanuman, the monkey-general, then searched the whole kingdom, paying attention to its design and layout, and even spying on Ravan as he lay at rest. Despite his wickedness Ravan was splendid to see, with his strong body and ten heads in recline, and Hanuman thought, "What a shame that Rama has to kill him." (Even the false old world of kaliyug has a pomp and beauty that is attractive.) Hanuman found Sita in the cottage and took her ring as proof of her safety and devotion to Rama.

Before departing, Hanuman decided to leave some sign of his visit. He destroyed much of Ravan's palace and army but was eventually captured. Ravan was surprised to see that a small monkey had wrought so much damage and that he had brought the message: "Rama is coming to destroy you." He ordered that the monkey's tail be wrapped in cloth and oil and set alight. Hanuman made his tail grow longer and longer until finally Ravan's soldiers ran out of oil and cloth. They lit the oily rags and, as the tail caught fire, Hanuman grew large again and, bursting free, set fire to the whole kingdom with his burning tail. (Baba refers to the tail of body-consciousness being set alight with the fire of yoga.) Hanuman then sprang back to India, taking with him Sita's ring as well as a map of Lanka.

Upon Hanuman's return, the whole of Sugriva's army gathered on the shore. Each monkey took a piece of rock and, chanting "Ram, Ram", threw the pieces into the sea, forming a floating bridge to the island of Lanka. (Hence the saying that, if you have faith in God, you can cross the ocean.)

The battle began. Ravan's army was very well equipped and, as the battle turned against them, the monkeys began to lose enthusiasm. There are many stories of how Rama, Lakshman, Hanuman and Angad inspired them to go on. At one point, as the monkeys were retreating, Angad charged onto the battlefield and, putting his foot down firmly, challenged any devil to move it. No matter what method was employed, Angad remained unshakeable and immovable, and the whole army was inspired to continue the battle. On another occasion Lakshman was shot unconscious by Ravan's son, Indrajit, and the only thing that would revive him was the life-giving herb, sanjeevani butti, which grew on the slopes of only one mountain in the world. Hanuman assumed his huge, flying form to reach the mountain quickly but, when he arrived there, he could not find the herb. Lakshman's need was urgent, so Hanuman ripped up the whole mountain and brought it to Rama in one hand. Lakshman was revived and the whole army was again inspired to wage battle against Ravan. (This story illustrates how it takes a lot of effort, bravery and cleverness to find the method to remove a vice. Hanuman didn't simply do what was necessary, but actually did extra.) This also shows how Hanuman did service in the subtle form and, doing service in that form, he could even lift a mountain by himself.

Eventually, all of Ravan's family was killed in battle, except Kumbhakarna, who was still asleep. Ravan ordered that he be awakened: elephants were sent to trample on him; boiling oil was poured in his ear; and bands played loud music. However, Kumbhakarna could only be awakened by the smell of food. The war was nearing its end and Ravan asked Kumbhakarna to kill Rama. Kumbhakarna was a giant and he stomped on everyone in his way.

Rama firstly shot off his legs but Kumbhakarna could only be killed when his head toppled. (This symbolises surrender of the intellect.) When he was killed, the giant fell on his own troops.

Ravan, now the only survivor in his kingdom, was forced to come onto the battlefield. He had ten times the strength of other warriors and was master of all weapons, some of which were invisible. Every time one of his heads was cut off a new one grew in its place. (Baba says that to kill Maya you have to destroy the cause, not the symptoms.) The destruction Ravan wrought was terrible. However, Rama managed to counter all of Ravan's tricks. Finally, Ravan's own brother, Vibhishan, told Rama the secret of Ravan's weakness. Rama aimed his arrow and shot Ravan dead through the navel. (This refers to the birthplace, the source, that is, thoughts.) In this way Ravan received his salvation through Rama.

Sita was so thankful to Hanuman that she gave him a beautiful pearl necklace in appreciation of her rescue. Hanuman went off and began to chew quietly on the precious pearls, cracking them open like worthless shells. Lakshman thought he was stupid and Rama told him to satisfy his curiosity by asking the monkey what he was doing. Hanuman told him that he was checking their worth, that they would only have value if Rama was inside. Laughing at his stupidity, Lakshman commented, "I suppose you have Rama inside you!" Hanuman turned to him and, ripping his chest apart, revealed Rama in his heart. In reality we are also like Hanuman in this respect because our families feel that we do not appreciate or value wealth, as we use it for godly service. As far as we are concerned, pearls and diamonds have no value at all, compared to God. He is always in our hearts.

Rama returned to his kingdom to rule with Sita. A laundryman in Rama's kingdom began to gossip about Sita's purity, as she had been

separated from Rama for so long. To put the people's minds at rest and to allay his own doubts, Rama decided to test her. He made her sit on a huge, burning pyre, declaring that, if she emerged from the flames untouched, it was proof of her purity. Sita passed the test and sat on the throne again with Rama. It was Ramraj, the kingdom of Rama, once again.

Having gone into Ravan's kingdom, Sita had to sit on the pyre of yoga in order to be purified again. This is the spiritual significance of Sita walking across the flame.

THE RUDRA GYAN YAGYA

The Sanskrit name 'Rudra' is another name for Shiva. In bhakti they say that Rudra is the bead which has five faces. It is Rudra (Shiva) who awakens realisation in us. Self-realisation also includes realisation of all our wrong-doings. In this spiritual life it is Rudra (Shiva) who gives us the knowledge of the five phases of the cycle, the golden, the silver, the copper, the iron and the confluence ages, and of the deity, warrior, merchant, shudra and Brahmin clans. Through this knowledge we are given the realisation of how to become the beads of the rosary of Rudra.

Physically, 'yagya' means 'a sacrificial fire' but symbolically, in the case of the Brahma Kumaris, it means 'institution'. It is the Benevolent Father who establishes this Rudra Gyan Yagya, a symbolic sacrificial fire, for the benefit of all His children. On the path of bhakti a big sacrificial fire is physically created, into which people sacrifice all the five elements of matter in the form of sesame seeds, ghee and varieties of grains. In our spiritual life we sacrifice our desires in the form of the five vices into the symbolic fire, this institution.

Caste Brahmins choose a particular Brahmin to be in charge of their yagyas and give him the name 'Brahma'. In this spiritual yagya, Shiv Baba also appointed a particular individual and called him 'Brahma Baba'. God Shiva, the incorporeal Father, gives us this knowledge through Brahma, our spiritual father. Through this knowledge we have realisation and become seeds, beads of the rosary, that is, spiritual beings of light. We dedicate ourselves to God and become His children, sacrificing all our vices, our old sanskaras, all material things and our old life style. We take on a new godly spiritual birth and become God's children and His instruments, dedicated to His task. In return we claim the reward of happiness for half a kalpa.

RUP AND BASANT

This is a story of two princes, Rup and Basant. As their stepmother didn't like them, she sent them away from the family home. The boys went to live with some rishis, who taught them in meditation how to dive deeply into the ocean of silence. They lived a pure life and received blessings from everyone. Whenever one would smile, flowers would emerge from his lips and whenever the other would speak, jewels would emerge.

In this story the stepmother wanted these two children to become insignificant, not known to anyone, and did not want them to attain the throne to the kingdom. However, her own son, who had become very wicked, ultimately proved himself to be unworthy of ruling. Finally, Rup and Basant, who had been sent to the jungle, became kings again because of their royal qualities.

The Supreme Soul always says that with the virtues of sweetness, cheerfulness, happiness and wisdom one is able to claim a throne in the future golden-aged kingdom. Baba is Rup Basant and if we too become rup (embodiments of yoga) and basant (one who showers knowledge), we can claim the future kingdom.

SATYANARAYAN

The Story of the True Narayan

On the path of bhakti the story Satya Narayan is told on the night of the full moon. It is a story of those who read about Narayan, who they think is God, in order to obtain blessings. It is symbolic of how we, too, have to recognise God and become soul-conscious so that we can also receive blessings.

In this story, there was a family of four- a mother, a father, a daughter and her husband. The name of the mother was Lilavati and the daughter's name was Kalavati. The father and the son-in-law had left by boat to conduct some business. The daughter forgot to keep in mind the story of Satya Narayan, as she had promised and, as a result, her father and husband were captured by a king. However, once she realised her mistake and began to reflect on the story, her husband and father were released.

Sailing back home after completing their business, they were approached by an old man who asked them to show him the goods they had in their possession. They did not want him to know the truth, so they lied, saying that they had nothing at all of value. As soon as they told the lie, their boat started sinking. They then realised that the old man was no ordinary man but an incognito form of God. So they told him all about their possessions and the boat righted itself once again.

The moral of the story is that, when you are honest and obedient, good things will happen in your life. On the contrary, if you do not keep this in mind, there will be problems. The Supreme Soul always tells us that the boat of truth will rock but it will never sink. The Almighty also tells us that God is pleased with an honest heart.

The story of the true Narayan relates how in satyug Shri Krishna is born as a child but in his previous birth he was only an ordinary man. In his previous birth God, the Truth and the Father, tells him how to become Narayan from an ordinary man by making effort to be all-virtuous and completely viceless. The Father gives him knowledge of the Truth, the Self, the Supreme Soul, Karma, the Drama Cycle and the Tree of Humanity. In satyug Narayan was completely virtuous and sixteen celestial degrees complete like the full moon. Then slowly the degrees started reducing and the moon began to wane. This refers to an evolving body-consciousness. The names in the above story have special meanings. 'Lilavati' means 'to perform actions' and 'Kalavati' means 'art' or 'degree'. The full moon signifies that, once we have knowledge and imbibe it properly, our quality of action becomes elevated, full of virtues, completely pure, non-violent and viceless, that is, sixteen celestial degrees complete.

In the story the king symbolises Maya. So, if we don't hear the story of how to become Narayan, Maya captures us. The old man on the boat represents our Beloved Supreme Father, who enters the old body of Brahma Baba and tells us that we have to listen to His knowledge, imbibe it and become truthful like God who is the Truth. If we do this, our boat will not sink nor will we be captured by Maya. Furthermore, if we are honest and tell Shiva the truth, He will help us to get our boat across safely. God Shiva comes only when it is time to transform ourselves from humans to deities. This is why the story has to be heard when the moon is full and also why the names Lilavati and Kalavati are used in the story. We become complete and perfect like the moon at the end of the confluence age, this makes us into deities like Narayan in the future. We have to become soul-conscious from body-conscious in order to become Narayan. In the boat the father and son-in-law recognised that the old man had divine qualities. This means that only those who recognise Shiv Baba in Brahma Baba's body will imbibe the divine qualities to get their boat across.

SAVITRI AND SATYAVAN

The story of Savitri and Satyavan appears in the Mahabharata. It is one of the many stories told by the sage, Markandeya, to the Pandavas in exile. This legendary story of Savitri and Satyavan is an example of how Savitri's devotion to her husband, Satyavan, brought good fortune, not only to her parents and her husband's parents, but also to herself. The story implies that her courage, wisdom and intense devotion gave her strength to influence the lord of death, Yama, to release Satyavan from his clutches.

Not long ago in the kingdom of Madras ruled a king called Ashvapati. He was a righteous king who had many wives but no children to carry on the royal line. Desiring a son, Ashvapati performed rigid penances, took vows and observed long fasts to accumulate merits. After eighteen years of constant devotion Ashvapati was granted his wish for a child, even though the baby born was a girl. The king rejoiced at his good fortune and named the child Savitri.

Savitri was both a beautiful and intelligent child. As the age approached for Savitri to be given in marriage, as custom demanded, no suitor came forward to ask her father for her hand, so awed were all the princes by her beauty and intelligence. Finally her father told her that she could choose the man she would like to become her husband. He instructed Savitri herself to lead a procession throughout the surrounding kingdoms and hand-pick a suitable man. Savitri returned from her search and told her father that she had found the perfect man. Though he was poor and an ascetic of the woods, he was handsome, well-educated and of kind temperament. His name was Satyavan and he was actually a prince, whose blind father, King Dyumatsena, had been displaced by an evil king.

King Ashvapati asked the venerable sage, Narad, whether Satyavan would be a suitable spouse for Savitri. Narad responded that there was no one in the world more worthy than Satyavan. However, Narad continued, Satyavan had one unavoidable flaw. He was fated to live a short life and would die exactly one year from that very day. Ashvapati then tried to dissuade Savitri from marrying Satyavan by telling her of the impending death of her loved one. Savitri, however, held firm to her choice and both the king and Narad gave their blessings.

When the fateful time approached, Savitri began a fast and prayed to God to strengthen her spirit. Then came the day, marked for the death of Satyavan. Satyavan shouldered his axe and was about to set off to cut wood for the day's fires, so Savitri followed him. While he was cutting down a tree, he began to feel unwell and sat down to rest. Savitri, knowing what was to come, put his head on her lap and carefully observed what was happening. His legs and hands became stiff and chill and she felt that death was nearing. In a short time Savitri saw a huge, dark figure coming closer. Trembling, she asked him who he was. The lord of death replied, "I am Yama and your husband's days are at an end. I am only speaking to you, a mortal, because of your extreme virtue. I have come personally, instead of sending my emissaries, because of your husband's righteous life."

Without saying another word, Yama then pulled Satyavan's soul out of his body with the small noose he was carrying, and began moving southwards. Savitri followed Yama at a distance. Yama advised her to go back and dispose of her husband's dead body, pointing out that it was what a dutiful wife should do. She replied that a dutiful wife should always be at her husband's side, like his shadow, and urged Yama to take her soul along with her husband's. Now Yama began to appreciate her words of wisdom and devotion to her husband. He urged her to return, saying that he would grant her any boon except a request for her husband's life to be restored. Savitri asked that her father-in-law should be given back his vision and Yama granted her wish. Savitri kept on following Yama, praising him. Yama was pleased and granted her four more boons. She asked that her father-in-law should be given back his lost kingdom, that her own father should have sons born to him and that she herself should be blessed with sons. These boons were also granted by Yama.

There was one more boon left, and Yama had said that he would grant her anything except the life of her husband. Reflecting on this, Savitri laughed and said, "O Great God, I thank you for complying with my request. You have granted me sons. However, you know my chastity and devotion to my husband. How can I have children except through my husband's life? You cannot now refuse to restore his life. I bow to you for your kindness." Yama realised that he had not given enough thought to the matter, before granting the boons. He praised her for her wisdom and persistence, freed her husband's soul from the noose and disappeared.

Through her devotion to her husband, Savitri was able to achieve great blessings for herself and her family. This signifies that, if we are devoted to our Husband of All Husbands, Shiv Baba, then we will be able to achieve great blessings for ourselves and the world. Savitri was able to restore her father-in-law's vision through the granting of the boon. In the iron age everyone becomes spiritually blind and, when God Shiva gives knowledge, everyone's third eye begins to open. Similarly, she was instrumental in the restoration of her father-in-law's lost kingdom. This signifies that, when we become godly helpers in imparting knowledge to others, we enable them to create their fortune of a future heavenly kingdom for themselves. In worldly terms, to have sons means to have wealth, prosperity and happiness. Savitri requested for sons to be granted to her father. This shows how we can become instruments to enable everyone to claim fortune, wealth, prosperity and happiness in the future world. Savitri also followed in the footsteps of Yama and praised him. This signifies that, if we follow in the footsteps of Brahma Baba and praise Shiv Baba all the time, then all our desires will be fulfilled. It should be noted that Savitri's birth was a blessing from God. Similarly, Brahmins take a spiritual birth as a result of blessings from God Shiva. If we, too, had Savitri's devotion, courage and wisdom in remembering God, the Husband, and in doing service for the upliftment of the human family, we too would be able to receive a great reward in the golden age.

SHIVA AND PARVATI'S MARRIAGE

This is a story about Shiva's marriage to Parvati, also known as Sati. In this myth it is said that Sati was the youngest daughter of Daksh Prajapati, the chief of gods. She wanted to marry Shiva against the wishes of her father. So, in order to get his own way, her father invited all the gods and princes from the four corners of the world, except Shiva, to attend a swayamvara. This was a grand ceremony during which a princess chooses her husband from among the invited kings and princes.

Sati came out to the assembly with the marriage garland to choose her husband but could not find Shiva there. She became depressed and threw the garland into the air, calling upon God Shiva to accept it. Shiva accepted the garland, so Daksh had to marry his daughter to him. Shiva took her to Mount Kailash where his palace was situated.

Some time later Daksh Prajapati held a great sacrificial fire. This was the sacrificial fire in which a horse was sacrificed. Many of the gods were invited but Shiva was once again excluded. Sati, seeing all the gods trooping off to the sacrifice at her father's home, went along to see her father and pleaded with him to invite her husband. Daksh simply ignored her and continued to repeat the scriptures. So Sati jumped into the sacrificial fire and was consumed by its flames.

It is said that Sati was reborn as Parvati to Himavan, the mountain-king, and that she later married Shiva once again. She was called Himavati or Parvati or Devi Uma, the high goddess of the Himalayas. She was also called Girija and Adrija, both meaning 'mountain-born'. She had begun deep meditation, tapasya, from her very early childhood in an effort to

regain Shiva as her husband. At last Shiva, pleased with her, succumbed to her wishes, and Prajapita Brahma performed the marriage ceremony.

On the day of the marriage all types of people - deities (devatas) and demons (danavs), people with only one eye, the lame, the ugly, the repulsive and all other varieties of people in the world - joined in the marriage procession. Spiritually, this means that everyone has the opportunity of participating in and enjoying the marriage of the soul with the Supreme Soul.

Baba has said in His Murlis that we are all Parvatis doing deep meditation (tapasya) to attain Him. When we reach our karmateet and perfect, complete stage at the end, He will take us all back with Him to Paramdham, the Soul World. Everyone will be in this wedding procession following God back home numberwise according to the manner in which we have passed - the ones who pass with honours will be close to Him and those who pass will be behind and those who fail will be right back in the procession.

SUDAMA

Sudama and Krishna were school friends. One day Sudama's mother gave him a handful of peanuts and told him to share them with Krishna. While the two friends were playing in the forest, they became separated and Sudama grew hungry and ate all the peanuts. When Krishna returned, he too was hungry and enquired after the peanuts, only to find out that there were none left. They returned to Sudama's home and his mother asked whether the peanuts had been shared. When Sudama told her that he had eaten them all, she became angry and cursed him, saying that a time would come when Krishna would have everything and Sudama would have nothing.

Later, when Krishna went to rule in Dwarka, Sudama, now married, was living in poverty. He had so much love for Krishna that he refused to worship his own king, who could have improved his situation. The king asked him, "If Krishna is your god, why doesn't he help you?" Sudama went through many trials but Krishna was only testing his faith. At last, an invitation came for Sudama to visit Dwarka. His wife encouraged him to go and insisted that he take a gift with him, asking, "How can you go empty-handed to meet your friend who is a king?" All they had was a small portion of rice which his wife packed ready for him to take.

Sudama reached the palace, bleeding and tattered from his long journey on foot. The guards thought that he was a beggar but he told them to tell Krishna, "Sudama has come." Krishna came running from his throne, barefooted, to meet him at the door of the palace and bowed at his feet. It was a beautiful meeting between the king and the pauper, two old friends. Krishna invited Sudama to sit on his throne and he washed his feet like a great guest, drinking the water. After they had spent some time together,

Krishna asked if Sudama had brought anything with him. He said, "I know your wife would not send you empty-handed." Sudama timidly offered his humble gift to Krishna who began to eat the rice with great delight. As he ate the first portion, Sudama's hut turned into a palace. As he ate the second portion, the land around the new palace turned into a magnificent garden. As he ate the third portion, Sudama's wife was transformed into a beautiful deity. Then Krishna's wife intervened, cautioning that he would lose all his wealth if he were to eat the last portion.

Unaware of all these developments, Sudama returned home. However, he could not find his house until he recognised his wife in the palace grounds. She told him that, because of his gift to Krishna, he had received multimillionfold fortune in return.

The spiritual significance of the story, when referred to by God Shiva, is that if you give a helping hand in godly service, be it through your body, mind, wealth or connections and relationships, you will, like Sudama, receive a multimillionfold return.

SUKHDEV AND KING JANAK

Long ago there lived a great sage, named Vyas, who is known as the writer of the greatest Hindu scripture, the Bhagavad Gita. With his great spiritual power he invoked a saintly soul to enter the womb of his wife. As the baby grew within the womb, he taught the unborn child the secrets of the scriptures through the subconscious mind of the mother. This baby, when born, was named Sukhdev. Because of his prenatal training he proved to be a most unusual child. At the age of seven he was already well-versed in the difficult Hindu scriptures and was ready to renounce the world and seek a true master. In India it is customary for a devotee to seek out spiritual teachers until he finds the one he recognises as his own God-chosen master or guru.

When Sukhdev decided to go in search of his guru, his father advised him to go to King Janak, the ruler of the province. As Sukhdev entered the royal palace, he saw the king sitting on an emerald- and diamond-studded golden throne, surrounded by courtiers and scantily-clad women who, according to Indian custom in the hot season, were fanning him with big palm leaves. King Janak was smoking a big oriental pipe. This sight didn't impress Sukhdev; he turned his back on this scene and started walking briskly away from the palace. He muttered, "Shame on my father for sending me to someone so caught up in material things! How could such a worldly man be my teacher?"

However, King Janak was both a king and a saint. He was in the world but not of it. Highly advanced spiritually, he could telepathically sense the thoughts of the fleeing Sukhdev. The saint-king sent a messenger after the boy, commanding him to come back. Thus the master and the devotee met. The king sent his attendants away and at

once embarked on an absorbing discourse about God. Four hours passed. Sukhdev was getting restless and hungry but he dared not disturb the God-intoxicated King Janak.

Another hour had passed when two messengers arrived, exclaiming, "Your Majesty, the whole city is on fire! The flames are threatening to spread toward the palace. Won't you come and supervise the efforts to extinguish the flames?" The king replied, "I am too busy discussing the all-protecting God with my friend, Sukhdev. I have no time for anything else. Go and help the others to put out the fire."

An hour later the same two messengers came running to King Janak again and beseeched him, "Your Majesty, please flee! The palace has caught fire and flames are fast approaching your chamber." The king answered, "Never mind! Don't disturb me for I am drinking the nectar of God with my friend. Go and do the best you can."

Sukhdev was puzzled by the king's attitude but he also tried to remain unaffected by the excitement. A short time later two scorched messengers leapt in front of King Janak, shouting, "Mighty King, the flames are approaching your throne! Run before both of you are burnt to death." The king replied, "You both run and save yourselves. I feel too peaceful in the arms of the all-protecting God to fear the audacity of destructive flames." The messengers fled. The flames leapt toward the pile of books that Sukhdev had by his side but the king sat, motionless and indifferent.

Sukhdev, now thoroughly alarmed, lost his poise. He half-rose from his seat and began slapping at the flames in order to save his precious books. King Janak smilingly waved his hand and the fire miraculously disappeared. Sukhdev, in great awe, sank back in his seat.

The king said calmly, "Oh, young Sukhdev, you thought of me as an impure king, attached to worldly things, but look at yourself! You forsook the all-protecting thought of God to protect a pile of books, while I paid no attention to my burning kingdom and palace. God worked this miracle to show you that, although you are a renunciate, you are more attached to your books than to God, or than I am to my kingdom, even though I live in the world instead of a hermitage." Humbled, the young Sukhdev then recognised the saint-king to be his guru-preceptor.

The spiritual significance of this story is that being a renunciate is a mental attitude and is not dependent on physical renunciation or on limited material possessions. King Janak lived his life as a trustee. He put Sukhdev through a process of discipline to teach him the art of living in the world without acquiring misery-making attachment to it. One day the king gave his new disciple two cup-shaped lamps, filled to the brim with oil. Janak said, "Hold a lamp on the palm of each hand and walk through all the magnificently furnished rooms of the palace. After you have seen everything, come back to me but remember, I will refuse to train you any further if you spill a single drop of oil on the carpets."

King Janak instructed two messengers to accompany Sukhdev and to refill the two lamps with oil as fast as the oil was consumed. It was a demanding task but, after two hours, Sukhdev returned triumphantly, without having dropped any oil from the lamps in his hands.

The king said, "Young Sukhdev, tell me in detail what you saw in each chamber of my palace." To this Sukhdev replied, "Royal preceptor, my only accomplishment was that I did not spill any oil on your carpets. My mind was so concentrated on the thought of not dripping oil that I did not notice anything in the rooms."

King Janak then declared, "I am disappointed! You have not completely passed my test. My injunctions were that you should look at everything in all the chambers of my palace and that you should not drip any oil from the lamps. Go back with the lamps and remember, no spilling of the oil while you are looking carefully at everything around you.

Ten hours later Sukhdev calmly returned. He had not allowed any oil to drip nor was he sweating with excitement as before. He could answer all the king's questions about the contents, however minute, of all the palace chambers. Janak told him his secret, "This is how I live: I live in the palace but I do not cherish it. I always look at the light of the soul."

Therefore, by practising soul-consciousness one is able to live in a detached, yet loving, way. At the same time, one should not neglect one's duties but do everything with full attention and accuracy.

THE THIRD EYE

One of the deepest secrets that people throughout the ages have wanted to resolve has been that of the discovery of the self, the discovery of the third eye. There are many myths told about this. Although it is not physical, the third eye does exist. It is the eye of wisdom. As such, it is located in the centre of the forehead where wisdom is seated in the soul.

In the greek mythology, it has been shown that Athena, the goddess of wisdom, was born out of Zues' forehead. This is symbolic of wisdom being situated in the soul, which resides in the centre of the forehead. The following story about Parvati and Shankar, sometimes also called Shiva, is the story about the opening of the third eye. One of the praises of Shankar is that he is Trinetri, the one who possesses a third eye. His third eye is said to be located in the centre of his forehead.

One day Shankar, sometimes also called Rudra, sat in deep meditation (*tapasya*). Along came Parvati, attended by many celestial maidens. In a playful manner Parvati approached Rudra from behind and put her hands over his eyes. However, as soon as she did that, utter darkness and gloom covered the world. The sun disappeared and the world became devoid of all activities. The gods were in an immense state of fear, as were all the living things on earth. Fortunately, this situation lasted only a few moments because the third eye of Shankar emerged on his forehead almost immediately.

Suddenly a great flame that looked like another sun burst open and appeared on his forehead, dispelling all the gloom and panic. It is said that the flame blazed so fireceely and was so enormous tthat the Himavat mountain was immediately consumed, along with its forests, beasts and birds. Parvati was so distressed to find that her father's Himalaya had been destroyed that

she fell at Shankar's feet in despair. Observing Parvati's distress, Shankar cast merciful eyes towards the mountain and at once her father's Himalaya was restored. The trees and plants were once again in bloom and the birds began to sing anew. Parvati thanked her lord.

Shankar revealed to Parvati the details about what had happened. He told Parvati that, when she covered his eyes playfully with her hands, the world had become dark and gloomy. So Shankar had had to create a third eye to sustain the world. Enormous energy in the form of a flame had burst out of his third eye and the mountain had been destroyed. It was only his love for Parvati that had made him restore the Himavat.

Spiritually, the story signifies that, when the third eye of wisdom is shut (Parvati covers the eyes of Shankar.), the world has turned away from God. The intellect is lifeless, without consciousness or the power of discrimination, thus becoming gross and heavy like a stone. Touched by wisdom from God, the burden is removed and the intellect, thus given new life, becomes a sparkling valuable diamond, filled with divinity. It is only when Baba, the Supreme Surgeon, the Creator, comes and gives us knowledge that the third eye opens and wisdom returns. So we can conclude that, when the third eye is closed, human life loses its beauty and truth, which leads to suffering. When the third eye opens again, life is transformed.

The following is another story about the opening of the third eye. In India there is a day when everyone fasts. Unmarried girls fast so that they can get a good and handsome husband. Married women fast so that their husbands will have a long life. During the period of fasting people only eat food once the moon has risen. The story goes that one day a young queen, who was fasting to ensure a long life for her husband, was staying at her mother's house. Her brothers didn't really believe in fasting but, if she insisted on going ahead with it, they didn't think that it should continue until after the moon rose. So they went to a distant place within the city and lit a fire. They then returned home and told their sister that the moon had risen, which explained why the sky was so bright. She believed them and broke her fast.

During a fast a woman is not permitted to do any sewing. However, since the young queen thought the fast had finished, she decided she would now make something. Without her realising it, every time she inserted her

needle into the material it pricked her husband's body, even though he was very far away. After many needles had pricked him in this way, he became unconscious, falling into a coma.

When she went home, she saw her husband, unconscious, with many needles inserted in his body. With the help of her maid she started taking the needles out, a task which took many days. Because she did not want her husband to know how many needles had been in his body, she decided to remove those in his eyes last. Before removing these last needles, she went to freshen up. However, while she was away, the maid took the needles out of his eyes, which brought him out of his coma. She then told him that she was his wife and that she had been removing needles from his body for the past few days. He believed her because he had lost his memory while he had been unconscious. He did not realise that she was not his wife.

So the maid took over the role of queen while the real queen had no choice but to act as her maid because of her husband's loss of memory. She bided her time, trying to think of a way to tell her husband that she was really the queen. She conducted herself so graciously that one day the king asked her if there was anything she desired. She requested a doll and he granted her wish.

She began to talk to the doll, saying that they were going to act out a true story about a queen becoming a maid and a maid becoming a queen. One day the king, overhearing this story, discovered the truth. He questioned the maid who was acting as the queen. She admitted to removing the last needles from his eyes and taking advantage of his loss of memory to pass herself off as his wife.

In the murlis Baba refers to both of these stories to illustrate how our eyes can only be opened through receiving true knowledge. When the light of knowledge is not there, all actions we perform are like needles that prick others and become karmic accounts. Baba tells us that He comes to free us from our karmic accounts but Maya makes us into maids and servants. Baba then makes us into queens again by giving us true knowledge. Once our karmic bondages are cleared and our third eye is opened, we become masters again. Baba says He is the one who opens our third eye and, when our third eye is opened we are able to see things as a whole.

UNITY IS STRENGTH

Long ago there was an old farmer living in a village who owned many properties. He looked after these properties very well, becoming quite rich and living a happy life with his four sons. However, as they grew older, the boys began to quarrel among themselves. The farmer advised them to be friendly but they did not listen. He became very sad. "How can I teach them to be good to each other? They are always quarrelling. I must put an end to it," he thought. The farmer was always thinking about his children. This affected his health and he became very ill.

When he felt that he was about to die, he called all his sons to his bedside. "Children, you must not quarrel. There is something I'd like you to do for me before I die." The four sons looked on, while the farmer asked the servant to bring a bundle of sticks which were then tied together. He then gave each of his sons the bundle in turn, asking them to break it. Each tried to do so but all of them failed. The farmer then asked the servant to untie the bundle. He took one stick from it. Giving each son a stick, he ordered, "Now break it," and each of them broke the stick easily. The farmer then said to his sons, "You see, children. You were not able to break the sticks when they were tied together as a bundle. Do you know why? Because they were joined together. The reason you could break them now is because they were divided." So do not quarrel. Be united. The sons felt ashamed and from that time onwards they followed their father's advice and lived happily ever after.

The moral of this story is that, when we, as the children of God, are united, we are also very strong. However, if we become weak, we can be divided.

GLOSSARY

- Ajamil** A great sinner, a totally degraded person. He was a butcher in a story of the scriptures.
- Allahabad** It means City of God. It is a place where two rivers, Ganges and Jamuna merged finally.
- Akasur** The name of a devil or demon.
- Allah** Name for God in Muslim religion.
- Arjuna** One of the Pandavs. Shri Krishna is supposed to have spoken the knowledge of the Gita to Arjuna, but now we are all Arjunas because we are hearing the true Gita from ShivBaba. Arjuna literally means white which means one who is pure in thoughts, words and actions. Arjuna is also a person who works hard to achieve something worthwhile. A person who acquires knowledge from God is also termed as Arjuna.
- Ashok Vatika** It means cottage without sorrow (place where Sita was prisoned by Ravan) and shok vatika means cottage of sorrow.
- Ashtavakra** A well known scholar while in his teens, whose body was bent and twisted in eight different places.
- Ayodhya** The capital city of Rama (as depicted in Ramayana.)
- Baba** How the soul leaps with joy on hearing the sweet name of its beloved Father, the Ocean of Bliss, Ocean of Love.
- Balarama** In Hindu scriptures, he is the eldest brother of Krishna.
- Bakasur** Name of a devil or demon.
- Bhagirath** Lucky chariot, ie. Brahma, who became the chariot of ShivBaba.

Bhagwan	God. (Maker of fortune.)
Bhagyashali	It means fortunate.
Bhakti	Religious devotion. Bhakti marg means path of religious devotion.
Bhasmasur	A devil who destroyed himself with fire. Bhasm means ashes.
Bhavan	A house, building.
Bhima	One of the five Pandavas. The word Bhima symbolises strength and power. A person who has the power of Yoga, Gyan and purity is Bhima. He is the son of wind which means he is free from body consciousness and is very light. A person who remains soul consciousness is fearless and is also termed a hero like Bhima.
Bhishampitamay	A great archer who taught Arjuna the skill of archery.
Bholanath	Lord of the Innocent One. A title of God Shiva.
Brahm	The golden-red divine light which fills Paramdham.
Brahm tattwa	The brahm element or substance.
Brahma	Prajapita Brahma. The corporeal medium for incorporeal God Shiva, and father of Brahmins. In Hindu scriptures, Brahma has four faces (which represent four subjects of Raja Yoga) and four hands which may hold a variety of objects such as a rosary, a water-pot, a book, a bow, a spoon or a lotus.
Buddhi	The intellect. Buddhi yoga means the yoga of the intellect. There are various types of intellect, for example, broad intellect, deep intellect, subtle intellect, far sighted intellect, unlimited intellect, sharp intellect, refined intellect etc.
Chandala	A person of a degraded caste, whose conduct was much below standard.
Dadichi Rishi	It is said he sacrificed his bones for the yagya. An example that Baba gives us.
Dasharath	In Hindu scriptures, he is the father of Rama and the king of Ayodhya.

Devata	Deity
Devaki	Mother of Shri Krishna according to Hindu scriptures.
Dharma	Religion, righteousness. In Hindu scriptures, Dharma is also God of Justice.
Dharamaraj	ShivBaba in His role of Supreme Adjudicator. The Last judgement.
Dhritarashtra	A blind king. In Hindu scriptures, he is said to have 100 son, who were called the Kauravas. Symbolically, blind represent one who is incapable to distinguish between right and wrong, one who is in the awareness of body, a king who is constantly aware of his physical power, might and sovereignty. Duryodhana was one of his sons.
Draupadi	Wife of the Pandavas. In the Mahabharat, vicious man tried to disrobe her sari, but her sari miraculously increased to 21 saris length and they could not remove it.
Drona	He is an instructor in the martial arts to the Kauravas and the Pandavas who lived at the court of King Dhritarashtra.
Durga	One of the Shaktis in bhakti. A remembrance of Mama.
Dushashan	Younger brother of Duryodhana (symbol of evil people), who disrobed Draupadi by pulling her sari.
Duryodhana	In the Bhagwad Gita, he was the head of Kaurava's clan.
Dwaparyuga	The Copper Age. The time when bhakti began.
Ganesh	A popular deity in bhakti with head of an elephant, worshipped as god of wisdom.
Ganga	The river Ganges
Gau mukh	Image of a cow's face. often with water coming from the mouth.
Gita	The Bhagwad Gita. Scripture of the Hindus who believe that it was spoken by Shri Krishna to Arjuna on the battlefield at Kurukshetra.
Ghandari	Wife of Dhritarashtra and mother of the Kauravas.
Hathamtai	A guru who told a member of a family to put a bead in the mouth whenever another person in the family gets angry.

	The bead is called as the bead of Hathamtai (which symbolises our original form as a point of light.)
Hanuman	The monkey god in the Ramayan supposed to have rescued Sita from captivity in Ravan's Lanka.
Harishchandra	A king who undergone various challenges in life but always spoke the truth and adhered to whatever promises he made.
Hirnakashap	A demon king who called himself God.
Holi	A Hindu festival, celebrated in March, when people throw coloured powder at each other.
Indra	God of rain and thunder. He is also the kings of gods. Indraprasth means the court of Indra.
Jamuna	A river considered sacred by the Hindus.
Janak	A king who achieved liberation in a second but did not leave his home like the sannyasis.
Jashoda	According to Hindu scriptures, Krishna spent his childhood with her.
Jeewanmukti	Liberation in life. The state of fruition and fulfilment enjoyed by the deities in the Golden Age.
Kahoda	The father of Ashtavakra.
Kala	A degree. Baba very often speaks about degrees of purity, 16 degrees is equal to 100 per cent which is in Golden Age. and 14 degrees is equal to 87 per cent which is in Silver Age.
Kaliyuga	The iron age. last of the four yugas, when the world reaches its most degraded stage. Kaliyugi means pertaining to the Iron Age.
Kalpa	Cycle of 5000 years.
Kamdhenu	In Hindu mythology, it is a desire-fulfilling cow.
Kans	A devil. Kans puri means the devilish world (Copper and Iron Age.)
Karna	The child of Sun-God. He, however, made a mistake of being on the wrong side, the Kauravas who stood for evil.

Kartikeya	In Hindu scriptures, he is the younger brother of Ganesh who rides on a peacock and carries a bow and an arrow.
Kaurava	In the Bhagawad Gita, one of the armies destroyed in the Mahabharat war. They symbolically represent the body conscious local rulership. Those who commit unrighteous, evil or sinful acts.
Khuda	A name for God, used by Muslims. Khudadost means friends of God.
Kunti	Mother of the five Pandavas.
Krishna	Shri Krishna, first prince of the Golden Age. The soul of Brahma incarnates as Shri Krishna at the beginning of Golden Age.
Kumbhakarna	A sleeping giant in Indian mythology .
Kurma	One of Vishnu's incarnation in the form of a half-man and a half-tortoise.
Kurukshetra	Site of the Mahabharat war according to the Bhagawad Gita (located in north of India). Symbolically, Kurukshetra is the human mind where a constant battle going on between good thoughts and bad thoughts.
Lakshman	The younger brother of Rama in Ramayan.
Lakshmi	The first empress of Golden Age. Saraswathi(Mama) becomes Lakshmi. Lakshmi is venerated by Hindus as goddess of wealth.
Lanka	Sri Lanka, where Ravan hold Sita captive according to Ramayan.
Madhuban	'Forest of Honey'. The place where Baba comes to meet His children. 'Madhu' means honey.
Mahabharat	The great war which brings Iron Age to an end and prepares the world for Golden Age. Also an Indian epic poem written in the Copper Age.
Mahavir	It is a descriptive of Hanuman which means great warrior. 'Vir' means warrior. Mahavir is also the name of the great teacher of Jainism who lived at the same time as Buddha and who did intense meditation.

Mathura	Located on the banks of river Jamuna, near Agra. In Hindu scriptures, it is said to be the birthplace of Krishna.
Maya	Human weaknesses. The outcome of body consciousness and the five vices. Symbolically, maya means the five vices of female. Mayajet means one who has conquered maya.
Meera	A great devotee of Krishna.
Mount Mandara	The mountain used by gods and demons as a churning stick to churn the ocean of milk.
Mukti	The state of perfect peace and liberation that souls experience in the soul world.
Nakula	One of the five Pandavas. Nakul is one who is free from worldly attachment. Such a person is devoid of any feelings of caste, creed or community for he is always soul conscious.
Narad	A great devotee of Narayan.
Narasimha	One of Vishnu's incarnation in the form of a half-man and a half-lion.
Narayan	First emperor of the Golden Age. The soul of Brahma incarnated as Shri Krishna at the beginning of Satyuga, and later takes the name Narayan after being crowned as emperor. In Hindu scriptures, he is said to be the incarnation of Vishnu.
Pandu	Father of the Pandavas.
Pandavas	The five sons of king Pandu, heroes of the Mahabharat war, namely Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. The word Pandavas means one whose acts are pure or clean. They are symbolised as the spiritual guides, the one who have loving intellect towards God. The Brahma Kumars are the true Pandavas.
Paramdham	The supreme abode, home of souls and of ShivBaba, the Supreme Soul.
Parvathi	The bride of Shiva in Hindu scriptures. Now we Brahmins are all Parvathis, brides of Shiva.

Prahlad	He is the pious son of a wicked father, Hirnakashap. Prahlad represents the children of God Shiva who is unaffected by the wrong action done to him by his family members and relatives when he refused to bow down to vices.
Prajapita	'Father of the People', the title given to Brahma.
Putna	A female devil in Indian mythology.
Raja Rishi	Royal renunciates.
Raja Yoga	The sovereign yoga through which our sins are destroyed and we become kings in the Golden Age.
Rama	Ruler of the Silver Age. (Moon Dynasty). Believed by Hindus to be an incarnation of God. Rama (Ram) also means God.
Ramayan	An Indian epic poem, written in the Copper Age about the exploits of Rama, and his wife, Sita.
Ram Rajya	The kingdom of Rama (God), that is the world in Golden and Silver Age.
Ravan	A synonym for maya, satan. Symbolically, Ravan means the five vices of male. In the Ramayan, Ravan, the devilish king kidnapped Sita, wife of Rama, and held her captive in Lanka.
Rudra	Another name for God Shiva. Rudra mala means yincorporeal rosary of Shiva in the soul world.
Rudra Gyan Yagya	Sacrificial fire of knowledge.
Sagar	Ocean. Anand ka sagar means Ocean of Bliss.
Sahadeva	One of the five Pandavas. Sahadeva is a person who acquires divine wealth and disseminate Godly knowledge among his fellow beings.
Sangamyuga	The Confluence Age, which lasts from the time of ShivBaba's coming, until the establishment of Golden Age.
Sanjay	In the Bhagavad Gita, he is the narrator who tells the blind King Dhritarashtra the progress of the Mahabharat war from day to day. Sanjay symbolises a person who has

	conquered his sense organs and vices like anger. A self-realised person who has grasped fully godly knowledge is called Sanjay.
Sanjeevani buti	'The life-giving herb'. 'Buti' means medicinal plant, which is actually 'manmanabhav' (be mine with your mind). The life giving herb is also the godly wisdom.
Saraswathi	Saraswathi is Jagadamba, the World Mother. Hindus remember her as the goddess of knowledge. Saraswathi is also the name of a (invisible) river.
Satyuga	The Golden Age. First of the four ages (yuga), when the world is new and pure.
Shakti	Power, spiritual energy. It is the memorial of Brahma Kumaris on the path of devotion.
Shakuni	He played dice on behalf of the Kauravas and succeeded in defeating the Pandavas. He is the symbol of a greedy and a dishonest character in Mahabharat.
Shankar	A subtle deity, agent for the destruction of the world.
Shantanu	King of Hastinapura. Father of Bhisma and grandfather of Dhritarashtra and the Pandavas.
Shiva	Man calls God by many names, but when God descends from the soul world, he introduces Himself with His own name, Shiva. Shiva means the universally Benevolent One, the Point of Light, the Seed of the human world tree.
Shloka	A sanskrit verse or hymn.
Siddhi	Supernatural power supposed to be acquired through the practice of hatha yoga. Siddhi also means success or achievement.
Sita	Wife of Rama, ruler of the Silver Age, Moon Dynasty. In the Ramayan, Sita was kidnapped by Ravan and held captive in Lanka ie. Sri Lanka.
Sugriva	Son of Sun God and king of the monkeys. Sugriva and Hanuman helped Rama to rescue Sita from Ravan.

Sukhdev	Deity of happiness. We become Sukhdev by listening to godly versions and by giving happiness to others.
Supnakha	A female devil.
Surya	Sun God.
Swayamwara	Ceremony during which a princess chooses her husband from among the invited kings and princes. Some times the ceremony was preceded by competition in archery and other martial arts.
Tretayuga	The Silver Age, second of the four yugas, which follows the Golden Age.
Trilokinath	Ruler (or knower) of the three worlds.
Trikaldarshi	Knower of the three aspects of time: past, present and future.
Valmiki	One of the greatest poets of India, who wrote the sanskrit Ramayana after having vision of this great poem.
Vasudeva	The father of Shri Krishna according to Hindu scriptures.
Vasuki	A serpent used as a churning rope to churn the ocean of milk.
Viddhi	Correct method.
Vishnu	Subtle deity, through whom there is the sustenance of the righteous world. Symbolically, Vishnu is combined forms of Lakshmi and Narayan which which means the perfect form.
Vishvamitra	A great sage who was a kshatriya (from the warrior clan) and became a Brahmin.
Vyas	Indian scholar, credited with authorship of the Mahabharata and the Bhagawad Gita. He was called Vyas Bhagawan (God Vyas.)
Yadavas	Together with the Kauravas, they symbolically represent the forces of evil destroyed in the Mahabharat war. They represent the governments and atheistic scientists of the western world.

- Yagya** Sacrifice, sacrificial fire, hence the institutions in which human beings sacrifice their vices and weaknesses to God Shiva (Rudra gyan yagya.)
- Yama** The God of death and the judge of men. When people die they are brought before him. In Hindu scriptures, Yama's sister was Yamuna(Jamuna).
- Yavanas** The Muslims.
- Yudhishtira** The eldest of the five Pandavas. Yudhishtira means one who remains firm or unshaken in battle. A person who has feeling of good- will or compassion for everyone and does good even to an evil-doer is termed Yudhishtira.
- Yukti** A device, means, method. Yuktiyukt means to be accurate.
- Yuvaraja** Crown prince, heir apparent.