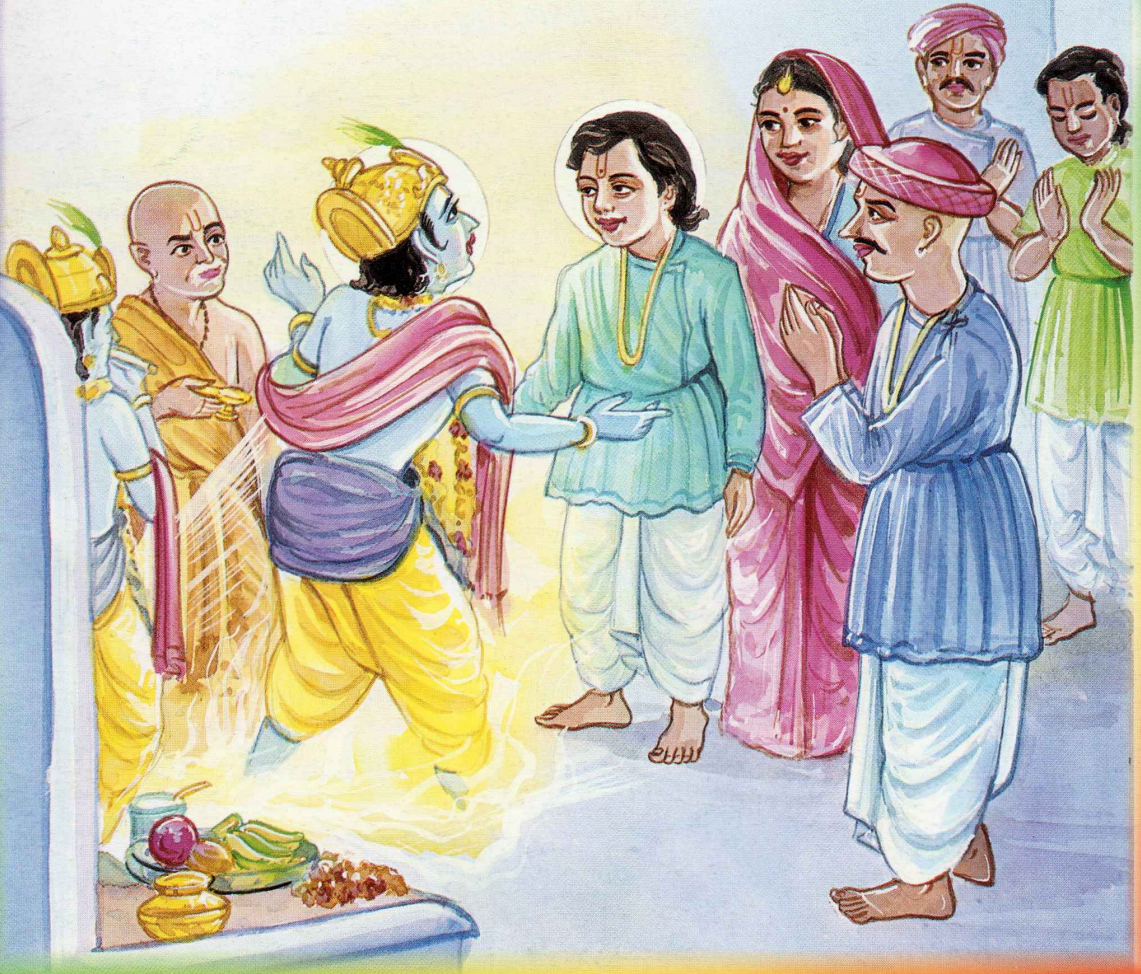


|| Shree Swaminarayo Vijaytetram ||

SHREE
GHANASHYAM
BAL CHARITRA
PART - 7



BE GENEROUS

You know that God provides us with everything we need, even the food we eat. He brings the rain that makes our fruit and vegetables grow, and he brings the sun that ripens them to perfection. So we should never think of all these things as ours, and we should share what we have with others. When Ghanashyam was a little boy he taught this lesson to his family.

In Ghanashyam's uncle Vashram's farm the cucumbers were ripening on their vines. On a hot day there is nothing so nice to munch on as a nice cool cucumber. So Vashram decided to cut some for the family. He plucked one from the vine, cut a piece from the end, and tasted it to see if it was good. It tasted very bitter, so he threw the cucumber away. Then he plucked another. It too was bitter. Then he plucked another, and another. But all were bitter.



Sadly he went home, and told the family that the crop of cucumbers was useless. When Ghanashyam heard this he went to the farm, and collecting a whole basket of cucumbers, he brought them home, and distributed them to his family. Not a single one was bitter! Uncle Vashram was surprised, but happy.

But Ghanashyam's aunt was complaining. She thought Ghanashyam was wasting all the cucumbers, and she told him not to go to the farm and pick them.



From that moment on, the cucumbers on the farm began to dry up. In a few days they were all shriveled and dry. Uncle Vashram was sad. But looking at Ghanashyam he knew what had happened. What God has given, God can also take away.

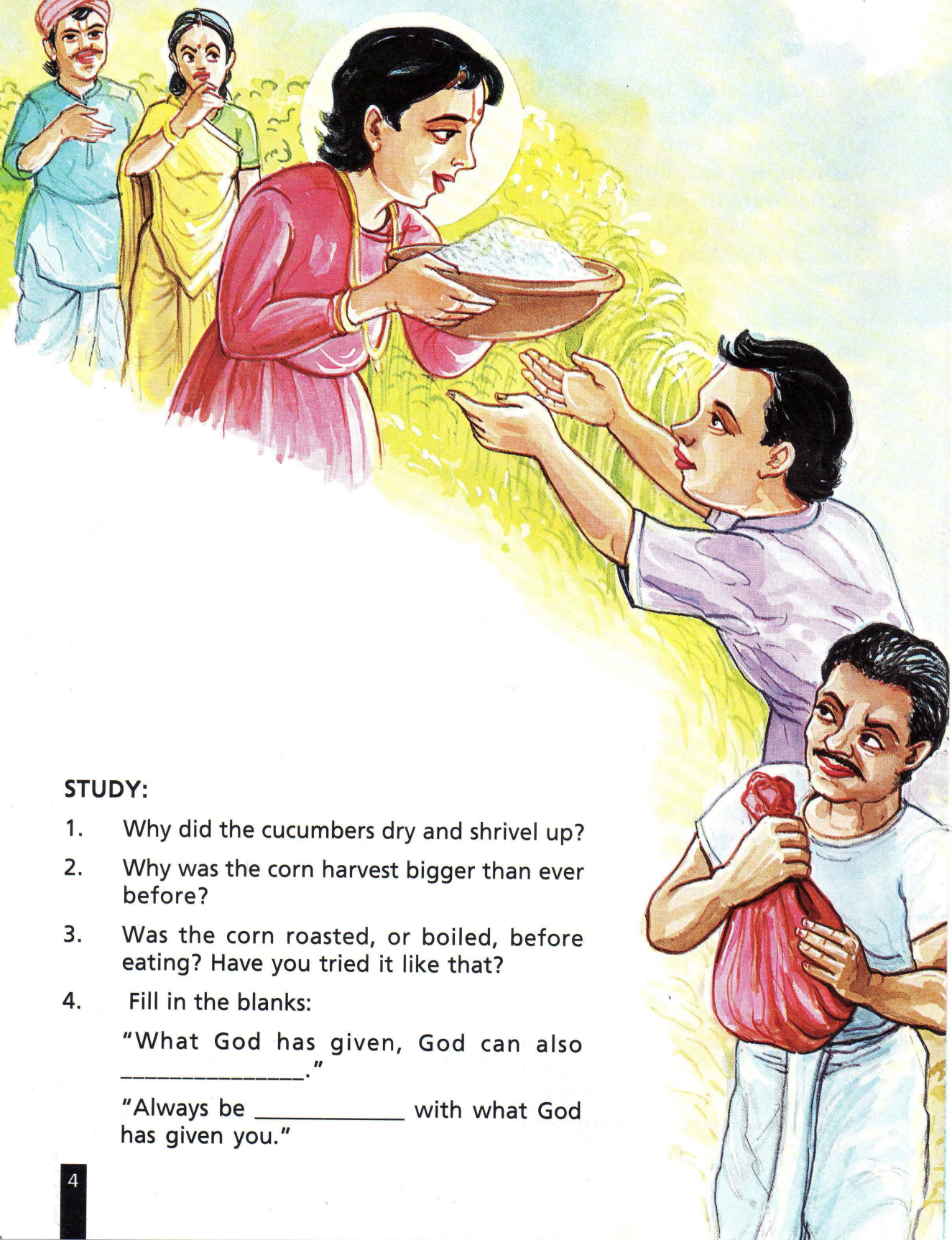
Putting a smile on his face, he told Ghanashyam that he could go to the farm any time he wanted, and he could eat as much as he liked.

At that time, delicious golden corn was ripening on the cob in the farm. Ghanashyam went many times to the farm, plucking the plump corn-cobs for himself and his family and friends. Roasted on a fire, they tasted so delicious and sweet. So much corn did Ghanashyam pluck that his auntie began to worry that all would be gone. But for every cob that Ghanashyam plucked, another grew.

That year, the corn grew bigger and plumper than ever before. There was so much of it, that they were able to give baskets of corn to all their friends. Uncle Vashram and his wife could not believe their luck.

They looked at Ghanashyam, smiling happily at them. Then it was they realized what Ghanashyam had taught them. Always be generous with what God has given you.





STUDY:

1. Why did the cucumbers dry and shrivel up?
2. Why was the corn harvest bigger than ever before?
3. Was the corn roasted, or boiled, before eating? Have you tried it like that?
4. Fill in the blanks:

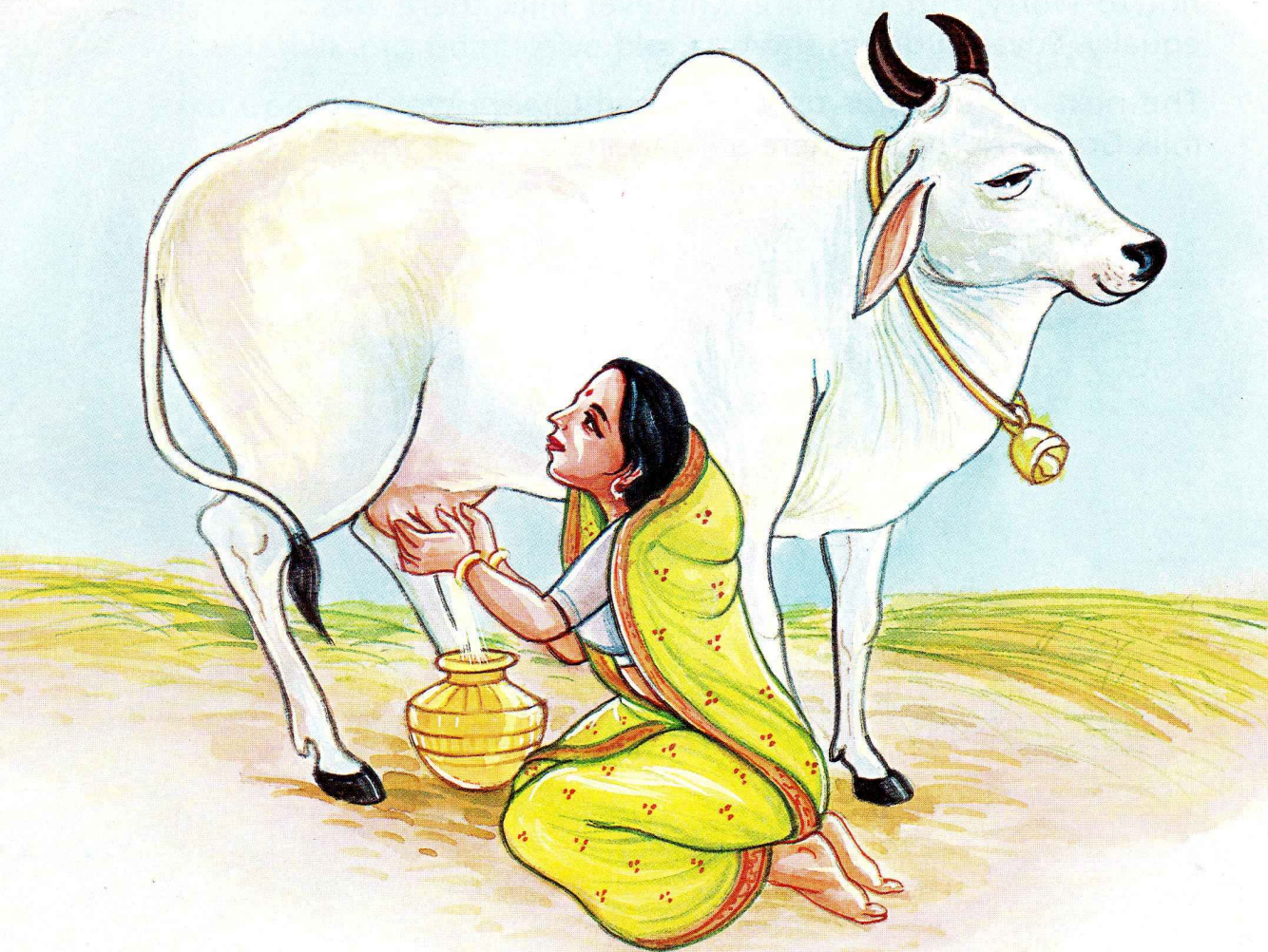
"What God has given, God can also _____."

"Always be _____ with what God has given you."

ALL ARE EQUAL

Gomti the cow was Ghanashyam's special friend. He would stroke her soft skin, and she would nudge him gently with her nose, mooing softly.

Gomti used to provide milk for all of Ghanashyam's family. Every morning and evening Ghanashyam's sister-in-law, Suvasinibhabhi, would take a bowl and milk the cow, and every day Gomti would give three or four litres of creamy fresh milk. There was always enough for everyone.

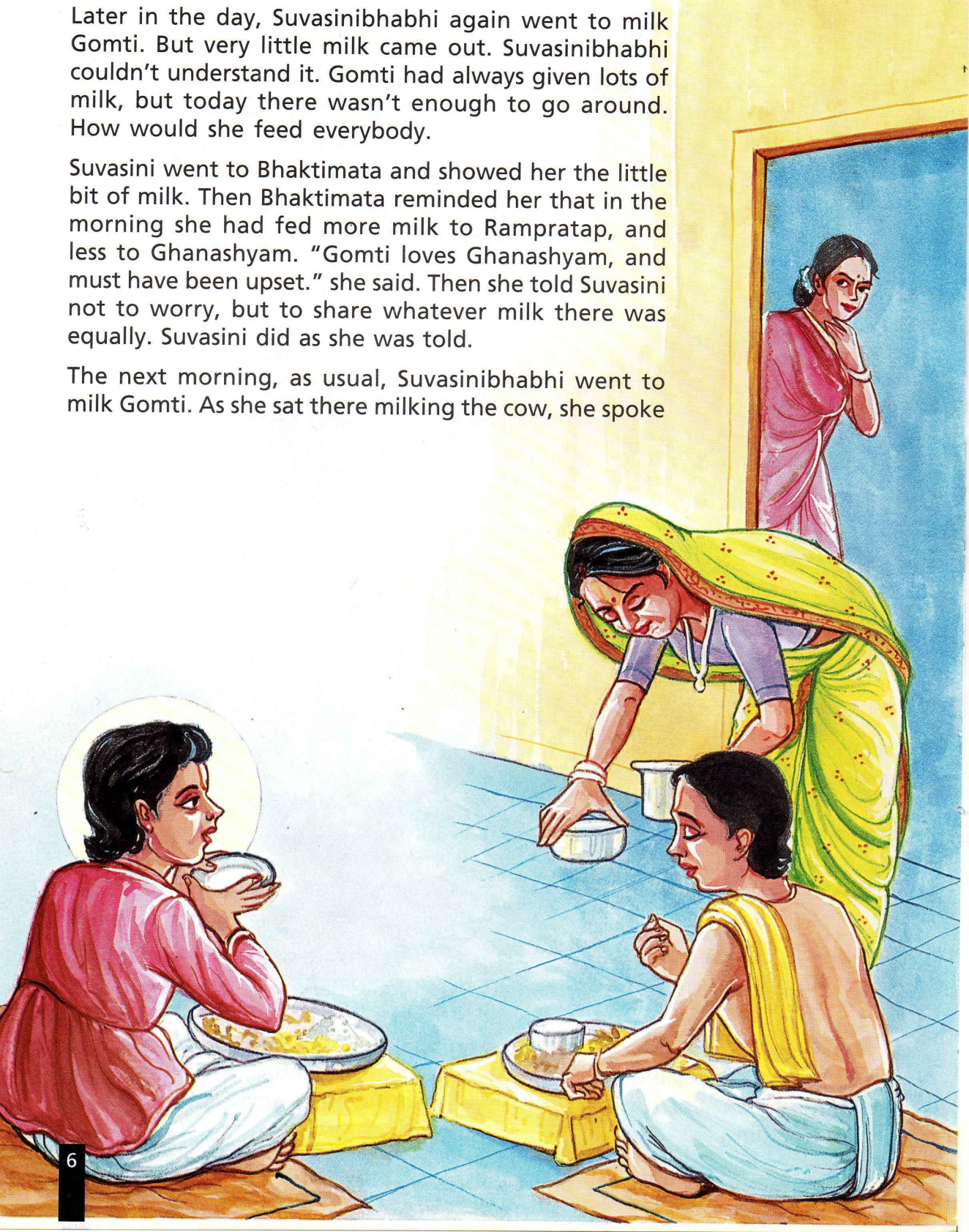


One day, after milking Gomti, Suvasinibhabhi began serving out the milk. But on this day she gave much more to Rampratapbhai, and much less to Ghanashyam. Bhaktimata and Ghanashyam were watching, but did not say anything.

Later in the day, Suvasinibhabhi again went to milk Gomti. But very little milk came out. Suvasinibhabhi couldn't understand it. Gomti had always given lots of milk, but today there wasn't enough to go around. How would she feed everybody.

Suvasini went to Bhaktimata and showed her the little bit of milk. Then Bhaktimata reminded her that in the morning she had fed more milk to Rampratap, and less to Ghanashyam. "Gomti loves Ghanashyam, and must have been upset." she said. Then she told Suvasini not to worry, but to share whatever milk there was equally. Suvasini did as she was told.

The next morning, as usual, Suvasinibhabhi went to milk Gomti. As she sat there milking the cow, she spoke



to Gomti softly. "I'm sorry I fed less milk to your darling Ghanashyam. I won't do it again." Gomti mooded happily, as her milk flowed into the bowl. Suvasini was surprised to see the big bowl fill right to the brim! Gomti had given more milk than ever before!

Overjoyed, she rushed inside and showed Bhaktimata. Bhaktimata smiled knowingly. Gomti had taught Suvasinibhabhi a simple lesson - whatever we have, we should share it equally.

STUDY:

1. Who was Gomti?
2. How much milk did Gomti give every day?
3. Why did Gomti give less milk?
4. What lesson did Gomti teach us?

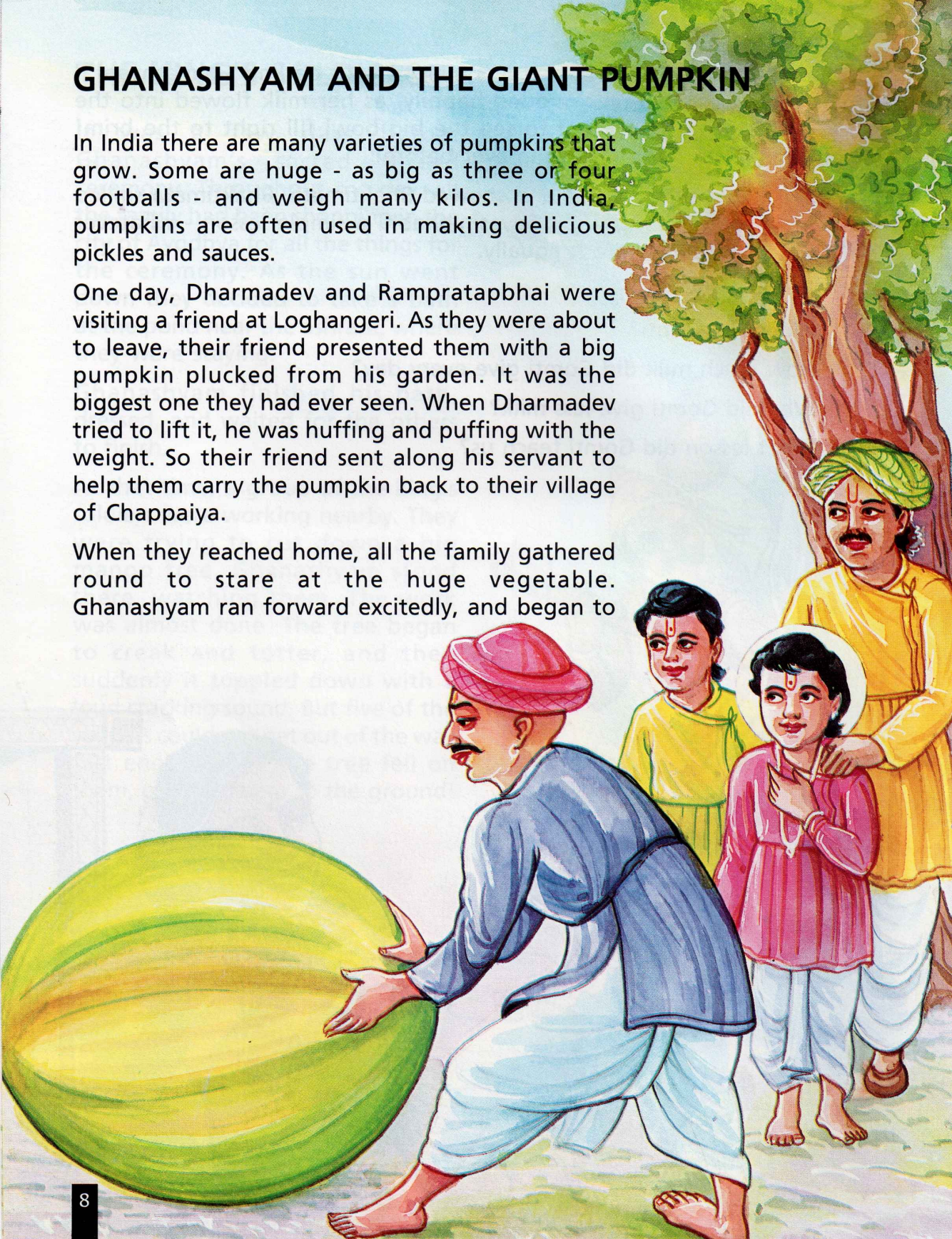


GHANASHYAM AND THE GIANT PUMPKIN

In India there are many varieties of pumpkins that grow. Some are huge - as big as three or four footballs - and weigh many kilos. In India, pumpkins are often used in making delicious pickles and sauces.

One day, Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai were visiting a friend at Loghangeri. As they were about to leave, their friend presented them with a big pumpkin plucked from his garden. It was the biggest one they had ever seen. When Dharmadev tried to lift it, he was huffing and puffing with the weight. So their friend sent along his servant to help them carry the pumpkin back to their village of Chappaiya.

When they reached home, all the family gathered round to stare at the huge vegetable. Ghanashyam ran forward excitedly, and began to



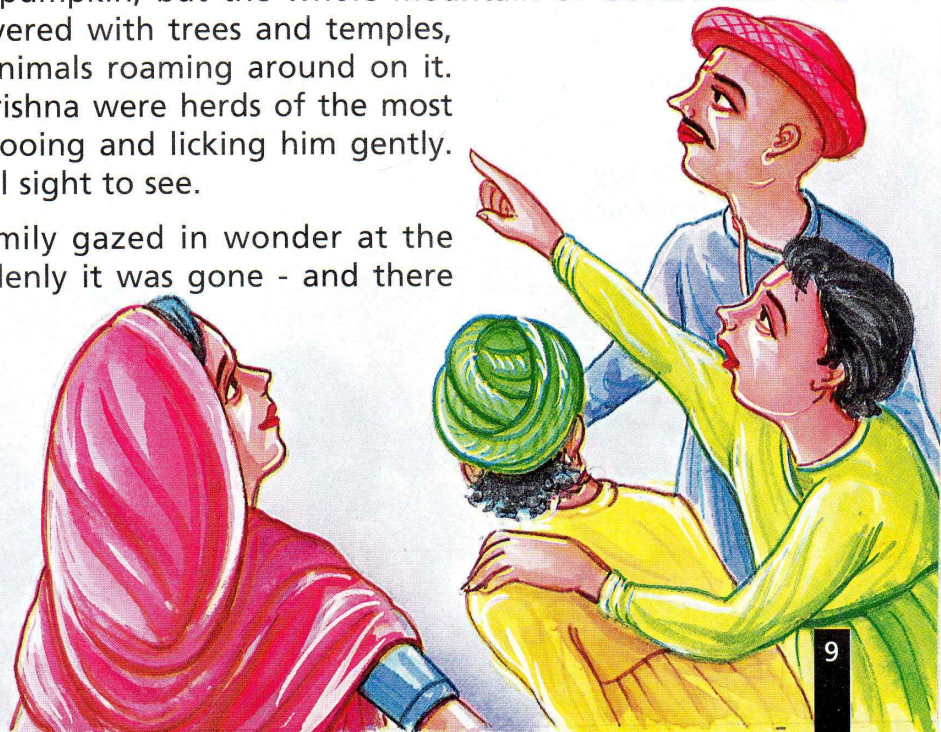


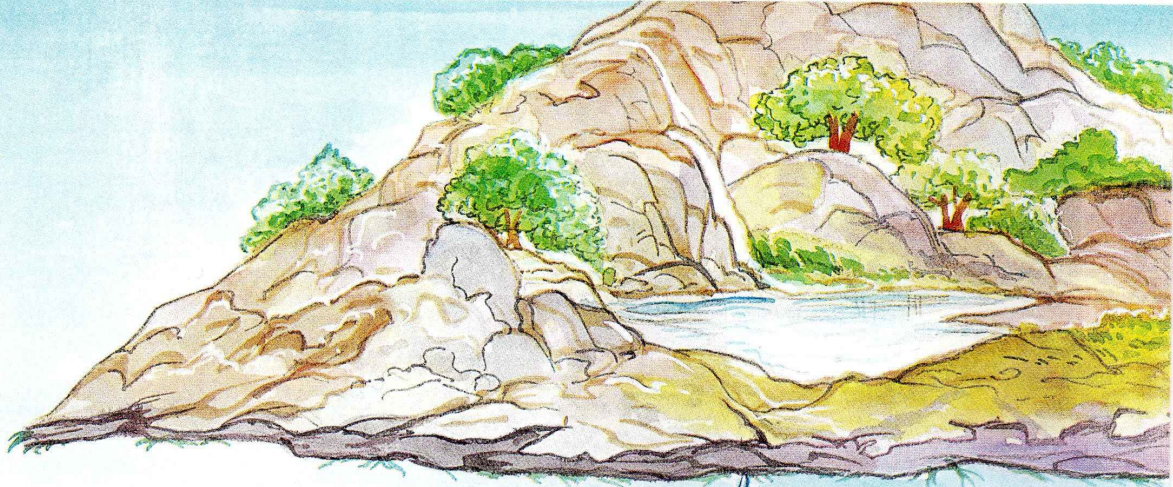
roll the pumpkin around, trying to play football with it. All the family laughed to see the little boy with such a big pumpkin. "Leave it, Ghanashyam," said Bhaktimata, "Its far to big for you to lift!".

Ghanashyam took this as a challenge. Summoning up his godly strength he picked the giant pumpkin up in his hands, as if it was a small ball! Then he threw it up in the air, and as it came down he caught it on the tip of his little finger. Everyone gasped as they saw the huge pumpkin balancing on the little boy's finger. The Ghanashyam crossed one leg over the other in the typical pose of Lord Krishna.

Suddenly Ghanashyam appeared to them all in the image of Lord Krishna. The handsome blue god stood there, radiating love. And balanced on his finger was not a pumpkin, but the whole mountain of Govardhan! The mountain was covered with trees and temples, and there were animals roaming around on it. And all around Krishna were herds of the most beautiful cows, mooing and licking him gently. It was a wonderful sight to see.

Ghanashyam's family gazed in wonder at the vision. Then, suddenly it was gone - and there

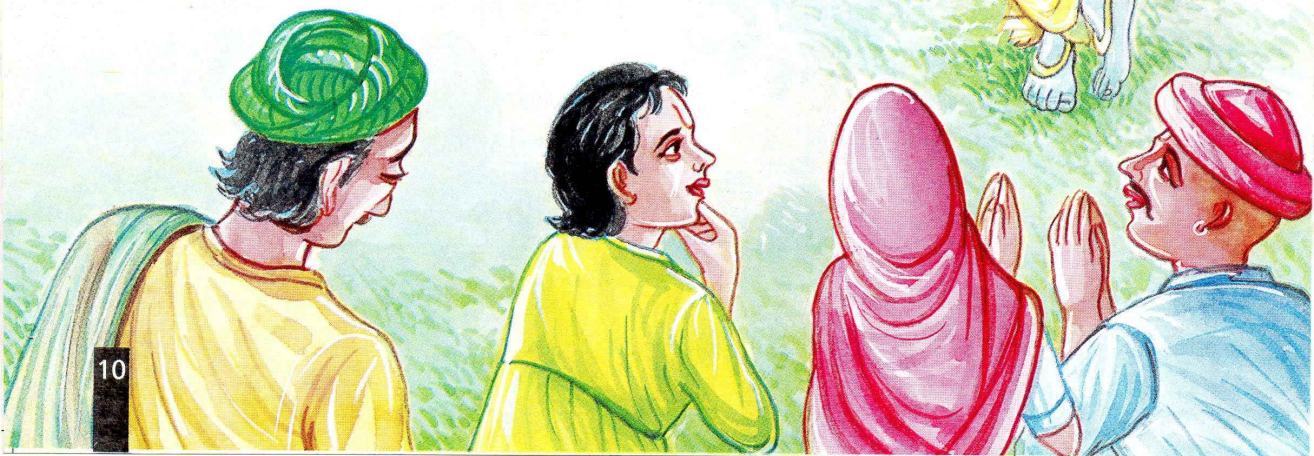
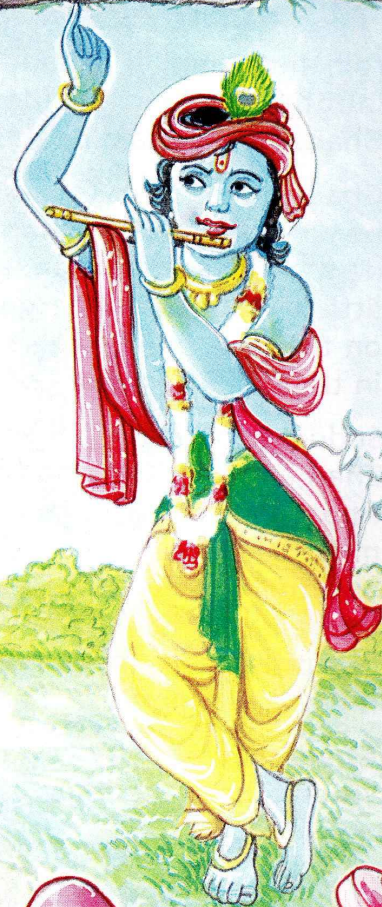




was little Ghanashyam again with the huge pumpkin balanced on his finger. Smiling at everyone, he put the vegetable down on the ground. Now everyone knew who Ghanashyam really was, and they gathered round him, touching his feet and praising him.

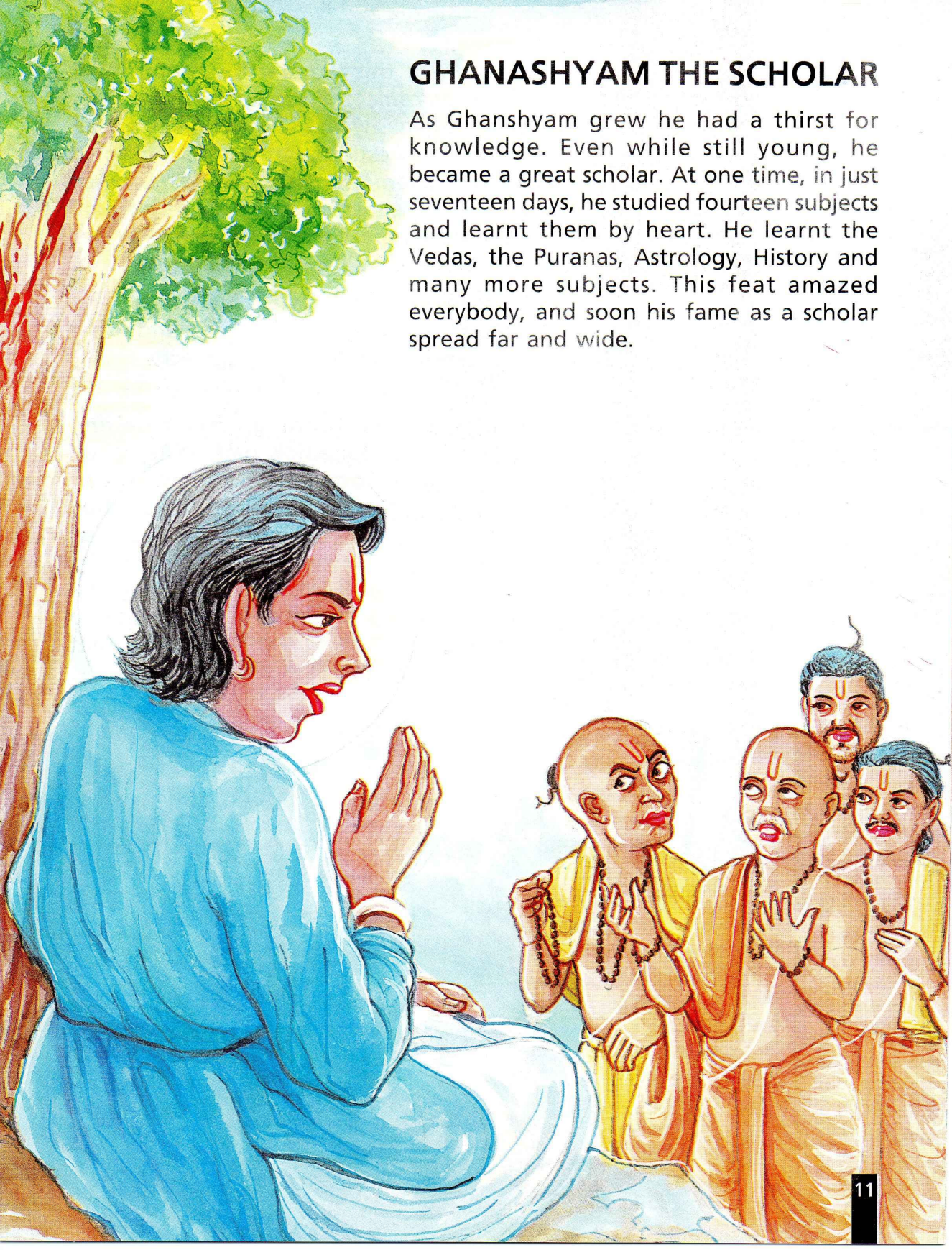
STUDY:

1. In India, what is pumpkin often used for?
2. What did Ghanshyam do with the pumpkin?
3. Who did Ghanashyam appear as?
4. What was Lord Krishna balancing on his finger?
5. In what holy book can you read about Lord Krishna?



GHANASHYAM THE SCHOLAR

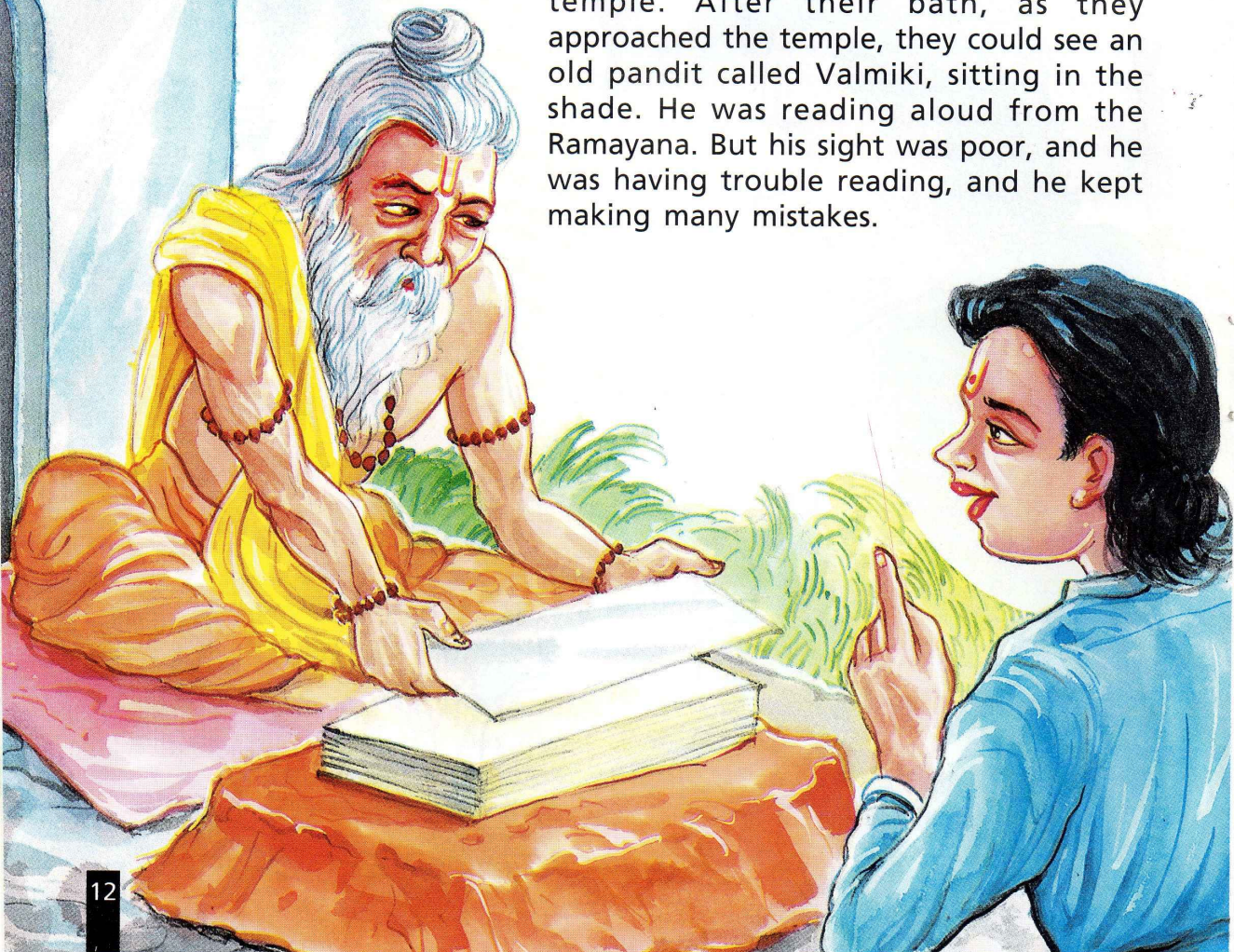
As Ghanshyam grew he had a thirst for knowledge. Even while still young, he became a great scholar. At one time, in just seventeen days, he studied fourteen subjects and learnt them by heart. He learnt the Vedas, the Puranas, Astrology, History and many more subjects. This feat amazed everybody, and soon his fame as a scholar spread far and wide.



Hearing of this wonderful scholar, four brahmins came one day to visit him. They tested Ghanashyam's knowledge by asking him many questions. But Ghanashyam could answer them all with ease. Then they realized that the boy was truly divine, and they worshipped him by covering his feet with sweet-smelling sandalwood paste.

That night the four brahmins and Ghanashyam sat up late, sitting under the trees and discussing many subjects. Finally they fell asleep under the stars.

Early the next morning, they rose and decided to go for a holy bath at Ramghat, and to offer prayers at the Hanuman temple. After their bath, as they approached the temple, they could see an old pandit called Valmiki, sitting in the shade. He was reading aloud from the Ramayana. But his sight was poor, and he was having trouble reading, and he kept making many mistakes.



Hearing this, Ghanashyam gently tried to correct the old man. At this, the pandit got very angry. "Who are you to correct me!" he shouted angrily. "Don't you know I have been studying all my life? You are just a young boy. What can you teach me?" he asked proudly.

At that moment, in a flash of light, Lord Hanuman appeared before them. Bowing before Ghanashyam, he then turned to the pandit. "Don't you know who you are talking to?" he said. "This is Purna Purshottam, and he has taken birth as Ghanshyam to save this earth. Your knowledge is as nothing compared to his."

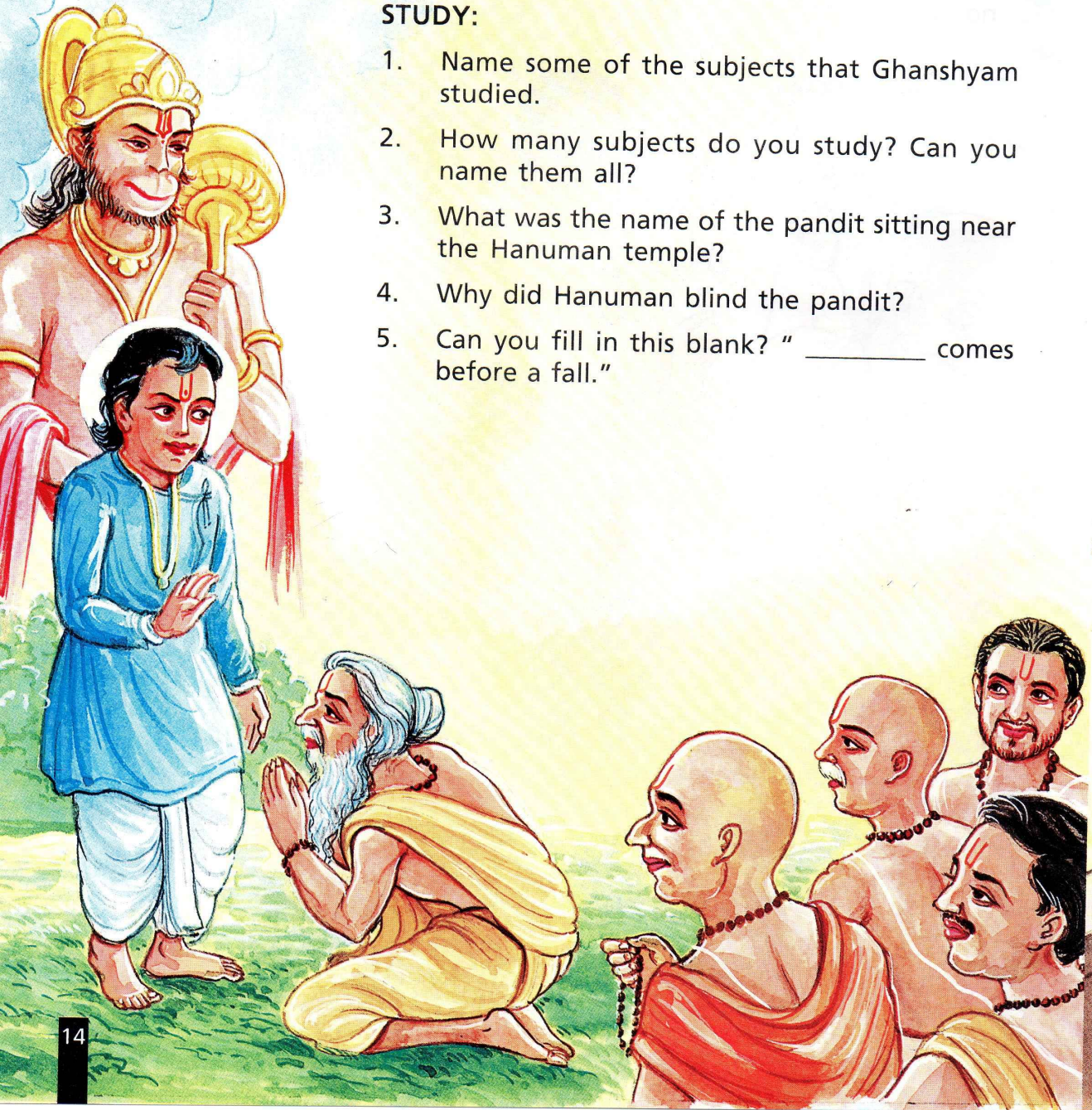


Saying this, he raised his hand, and a ray of light came from it, shining on the pandit. The old man was blinded by the light, and suddenly he could see no more. He was completely blind, and he began to wail and weep. Then crawling on his hands and knees he came before Ghanashyam, begging for forgiveness. "Forgive me Maharaj! I was too proud. Now I realize my sin."

Taking pity on him, Ghanashyam blessed him, and restored his sight.

STUDY:

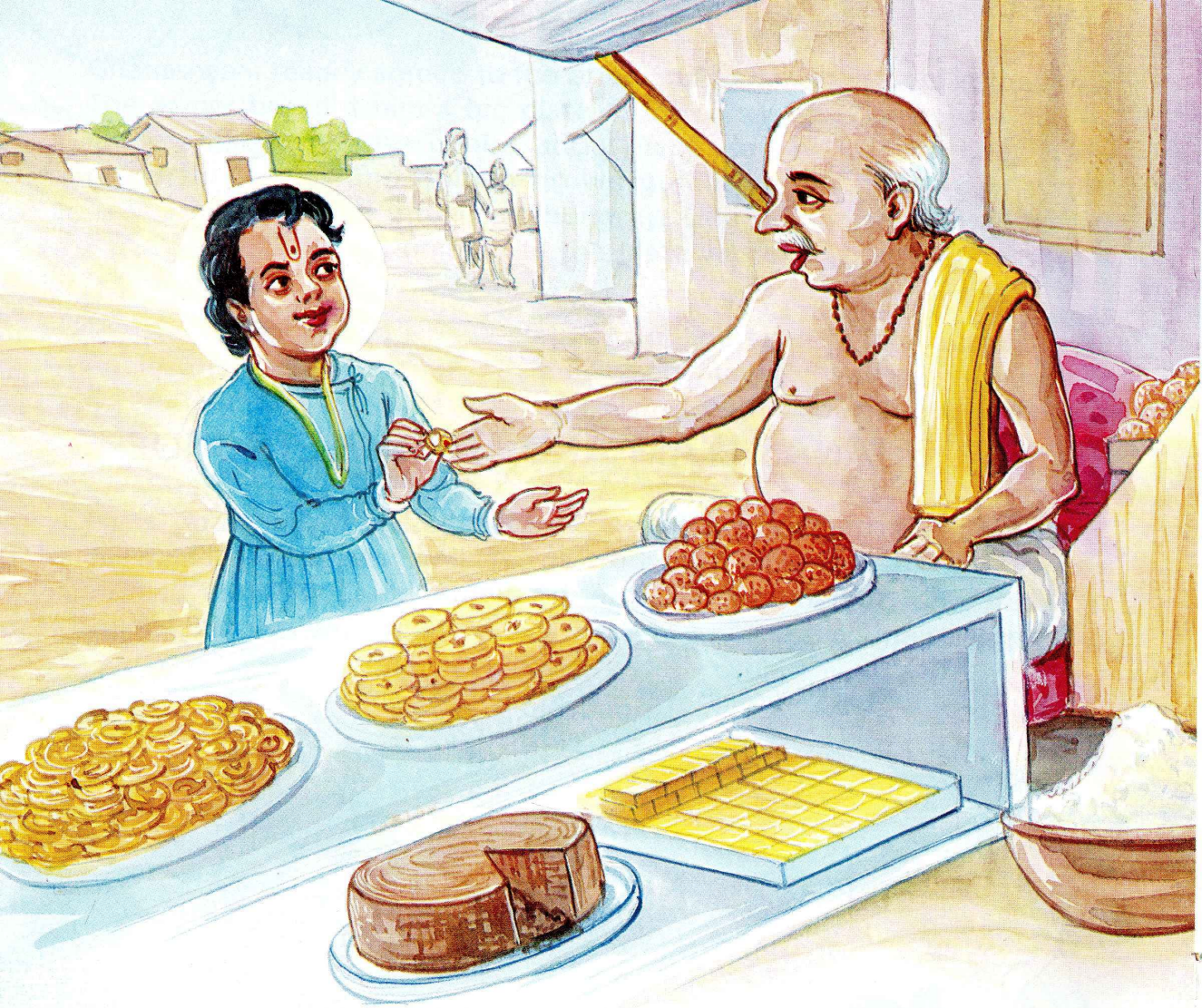
1. Name some of the subjects that Ghanashyam studied.
2. How many subjects do you study? Can you name them all?
3. What was the name of the pandit sitting near the Hanuman temple?
4. Why did Hanuman blind the pandit?
5. Can you fill in this blank? " _____ comes before a fall."



An illustration of a young boy with dark, wavy hair and a tilak on his forehead, wearing a light blue shirt. He is looking upwards with a longing expression towards a wooden counter. On the counter, there are several golden-colored jars and a large, round, pinkish-red pot with a golden lid. The background is a simple, light-colored wall with a window on the left. The overall style is that of a children's book illustration.

GHANASHYAM AND THE SWEETS SHOP

All children love sweets, and Ghanashyam was no different. Often he would pass the sweet shop, and seeing the sweets piled high on the counter his mouth would water.



One day he had such a longing for sweets, but there were none in the house, and he had no money to buy some. At that time, his sister-in-law, Suvasini, was in the kitchen preparing vegetables. She had taken the gold ring from her finger, and laid it on the shelf, so as not to spoil it. When Ghanashyam saw the ring lying there, he had an idea. Quietly, he slipped the ring into his pocket, and left the house.

Ghanashyam ran swiftly to the market place. Reaching the sweet shop, he stopped, staring at the piles of sweets. Then, pulling the ring from his pocket, he offered it to the shopkeeper. "How many sweets will you give me for this?" he asked. The shopkeeper looked carefully at the ring, holding it up

to the light. He could see it was a very valuable ring.

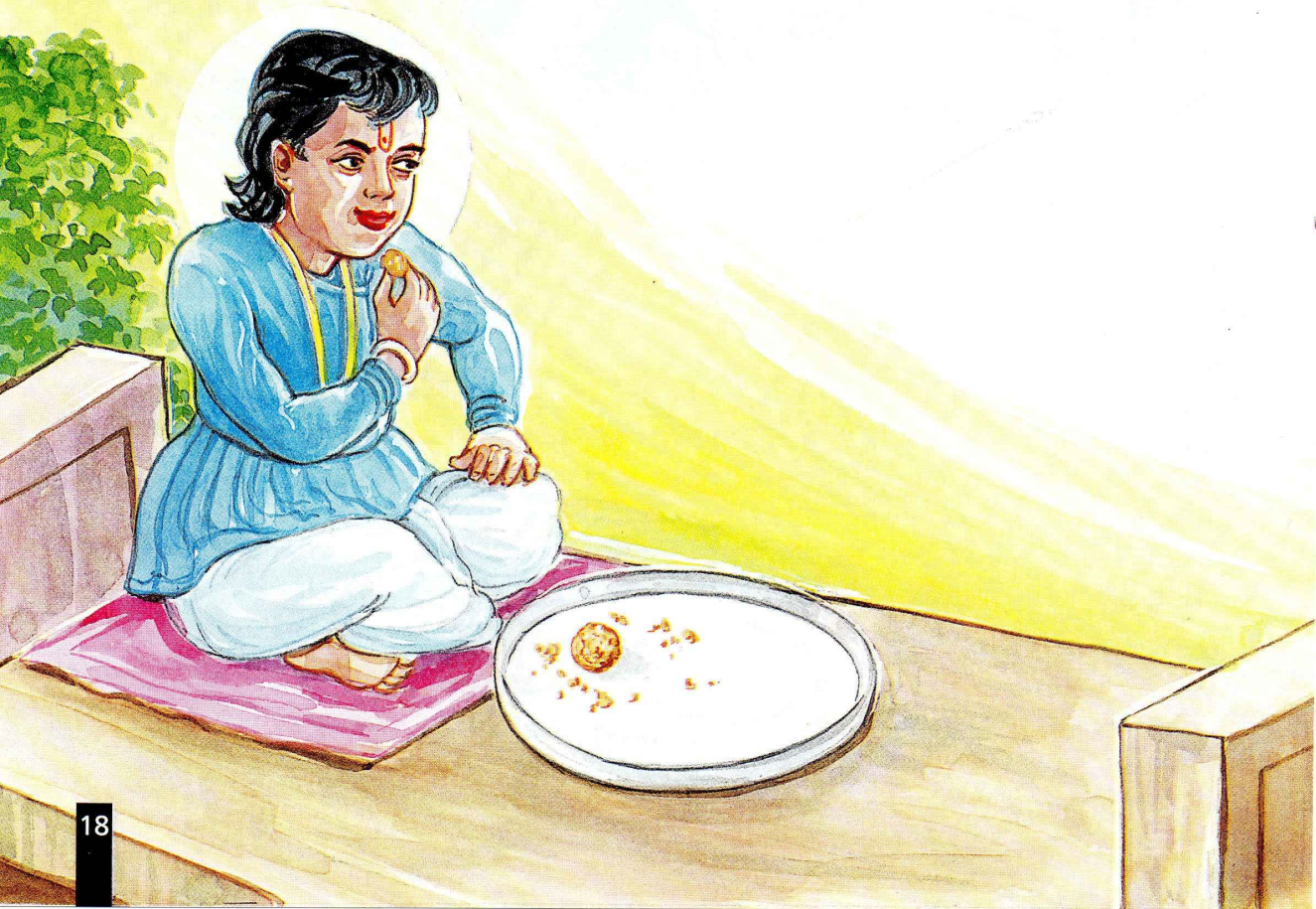
He was a shrewd man. He looked at the little boy. "Why, I'll let you eat as many sweets as you can in exchange for this." he said. Ghanashyam was so small, that the shopkeeper was sure he wouldn't be able to eat many sweets.



Ghanashyam readily agreed to the offer. Sitting him on a stool in the shop, The owner brought him a big plate of mixed sweets. There were golden ladoos, milky white ras goolas, sticky jilebis, soft pendas, spongy barfi, colourful halwas and golden brown gulab jamuns floating in syrup. Ghanashyam tucked into them hungrily. One by one they disappeared into his mouth. In no time at all the plate was empty, and Ghanashyam asked for more.

The shop-keeper piled up the plate again, and set it before Ghanashyam. Again Ghanashyam tucked into the sweets hungrily, and again the plate was empty, and again he asked for more! By now the shopkeeper was getting worried. But he had made a bargain, and had to keep his promise, and so again he filled up the plate and handed it to the boy.

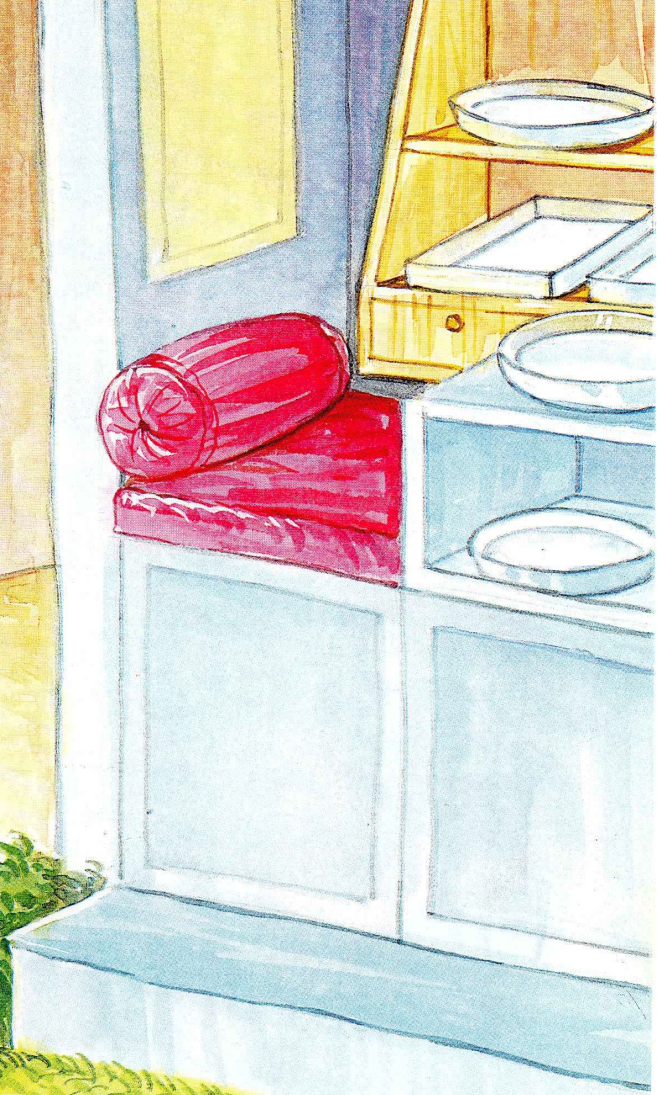
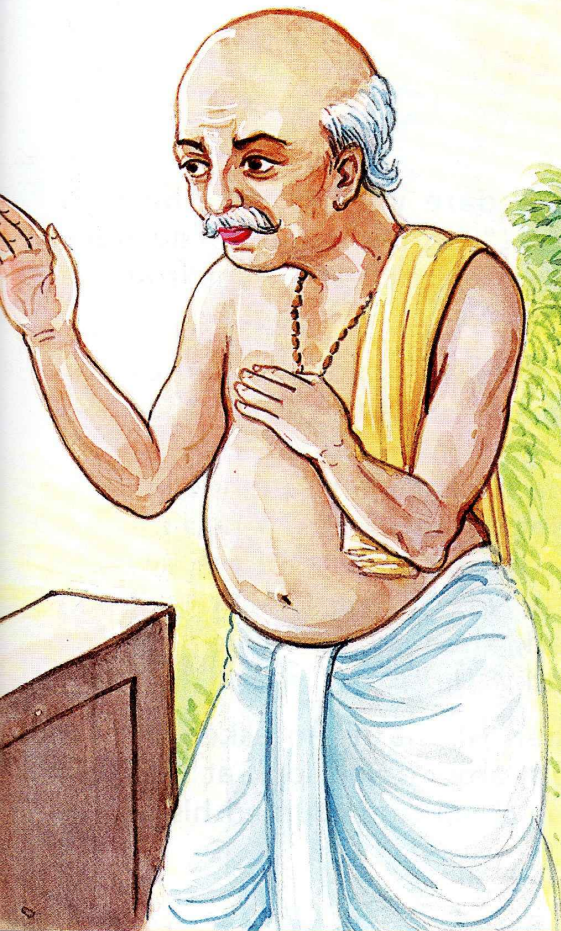
Again Ghanashyam finished off the sweets, and again he asked for more. No matter how many sweets the shopkeeper brought him, Ghanashyam finished them all. Again and again the plate was filled and emptied. The shopkeeper was wringing his hands in despair. At last, all the sweets in the

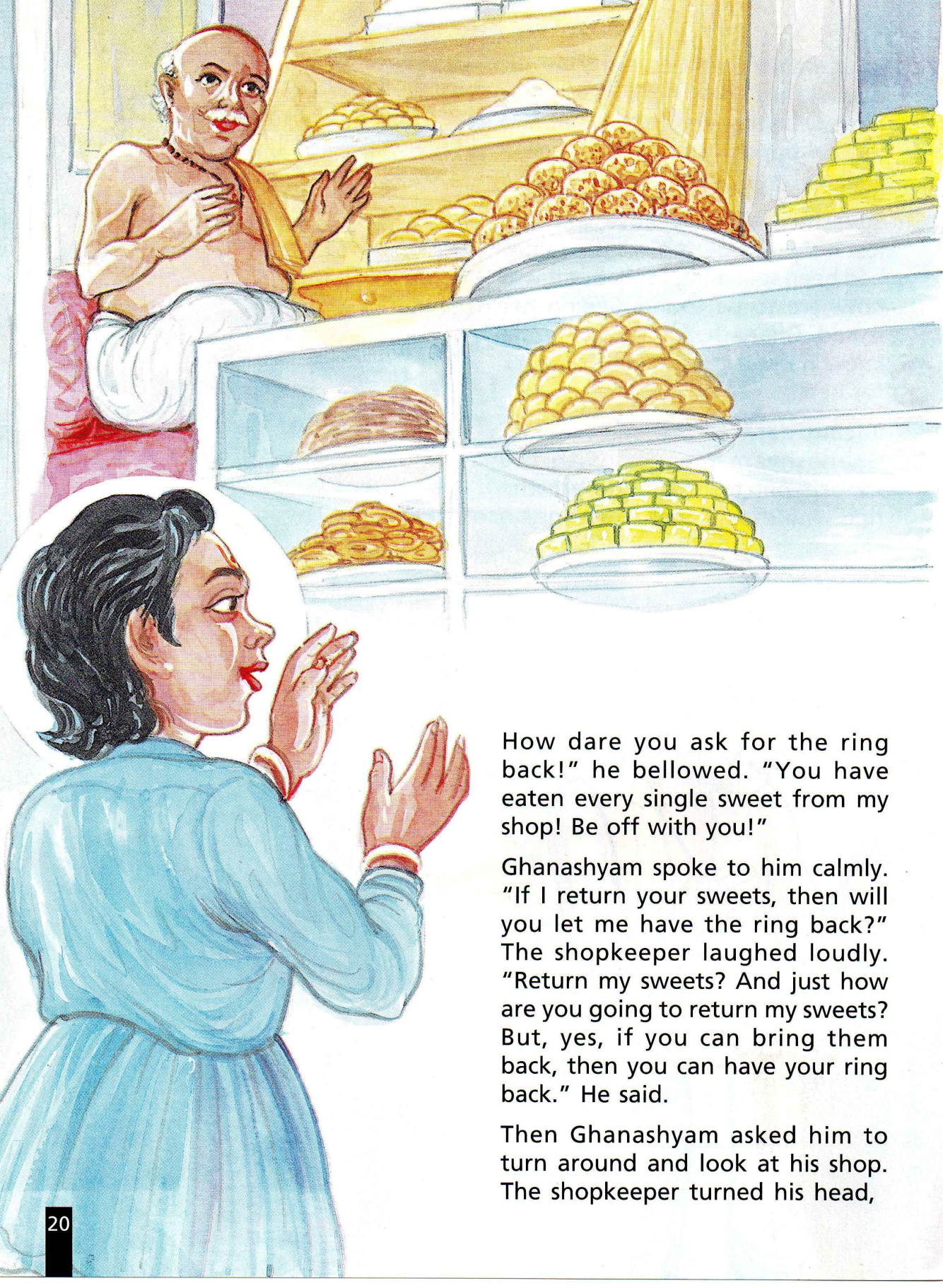


shop were gone. Ghanashyam got down from the stool and smiling happily he thanked the owner, and left for home.

Back home, Ghanashyam found Suvasini crying because she had lost her precious ring. All the family had been searching for it, but it was nowhere to be found. Seeing her so sad, Ghanashyam felt guilty. He knew he had to get the ring back for her.

Racing back to the sweet shop, Ghanashyam pleaded with the shopkeeper to give him back the ring. The shopkeeper was angry. "





How dare you ask for the ring back!" he bellowed. "You have eaten every single sweet from my shop! Be off with you!"

Ghanashyam spoke to him calmly. "If I return your sweets, then will you let me have the ring back?" The shopkeeper laughed loudly. "Return my sweets? And just how are you going to return my sweets? But, yes, if you can bring them back, then you can have your ring back." He said.

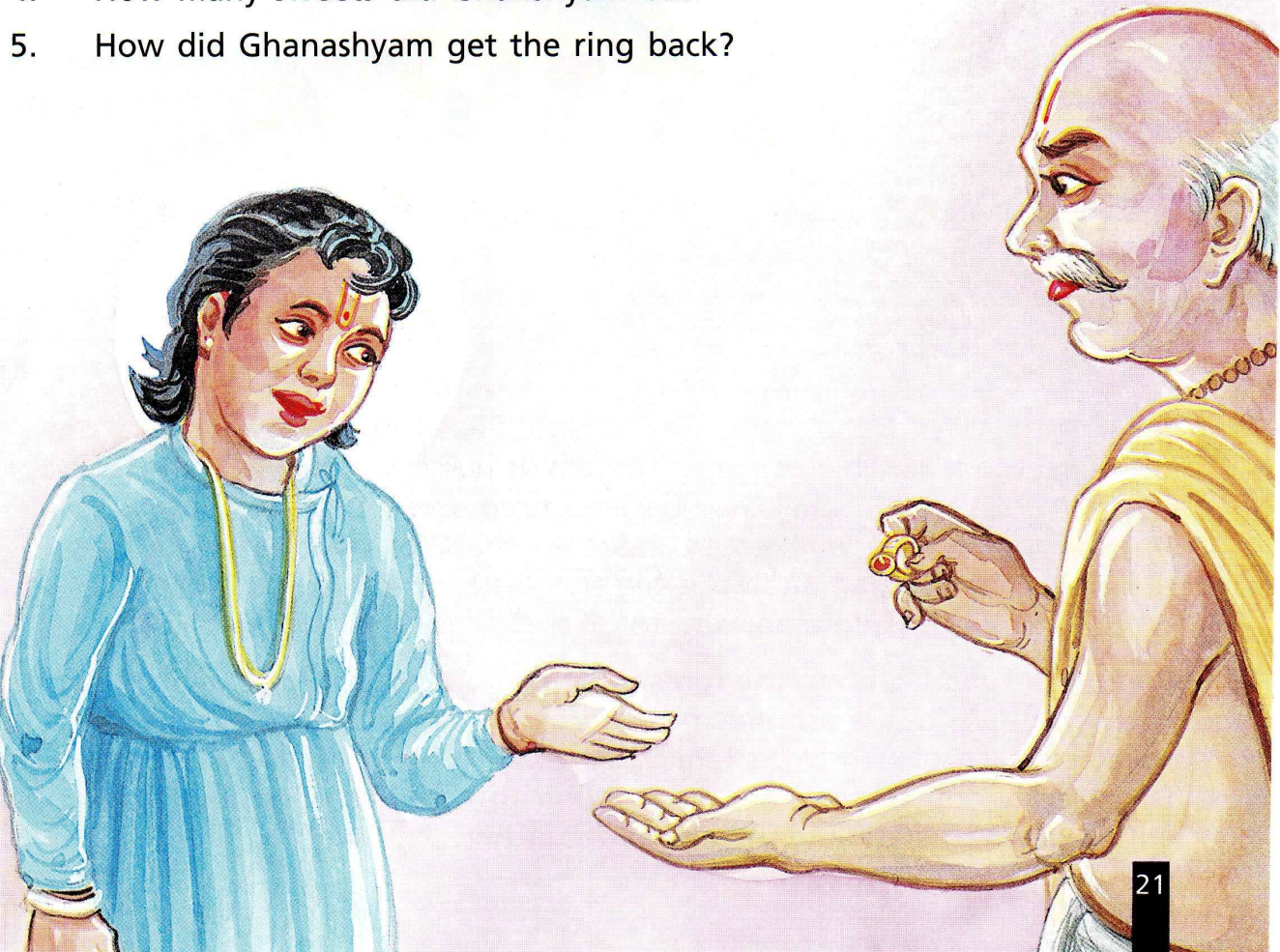
Then Ghanashyam asked him to turn around and look at his shop. The shopkeeper turned his head,

and looked at the shelves. He could not believe what he saw! There were the piles of ladoos. There were the dishes of gulab jamuns. There were the mountains of squiggly jilebis. There were the rows of glistening pendas. Everything was as it was before.

The shopkeeper stood there amazed, scratching and shaking his head. Ghanashyam came up to him, and looking up into the owner's face, he held out his hand. "Can I have my ring back now?" he asked. Reluctantly, the shopkeeper put his hand in his pocket, pulled out the golden ring, and handed it to him. Overjoyed, the little Ghanashyam ran back home and returned the ring to his sister-in-law.

STUDY:

1. Who did the gold ring belong to?
2. How many kinds of sweets can you name?
3. What is your favourite sweet?
4. How many sweets did Ghanashyam eat?
5. How did Ghanashyam get the ring back?



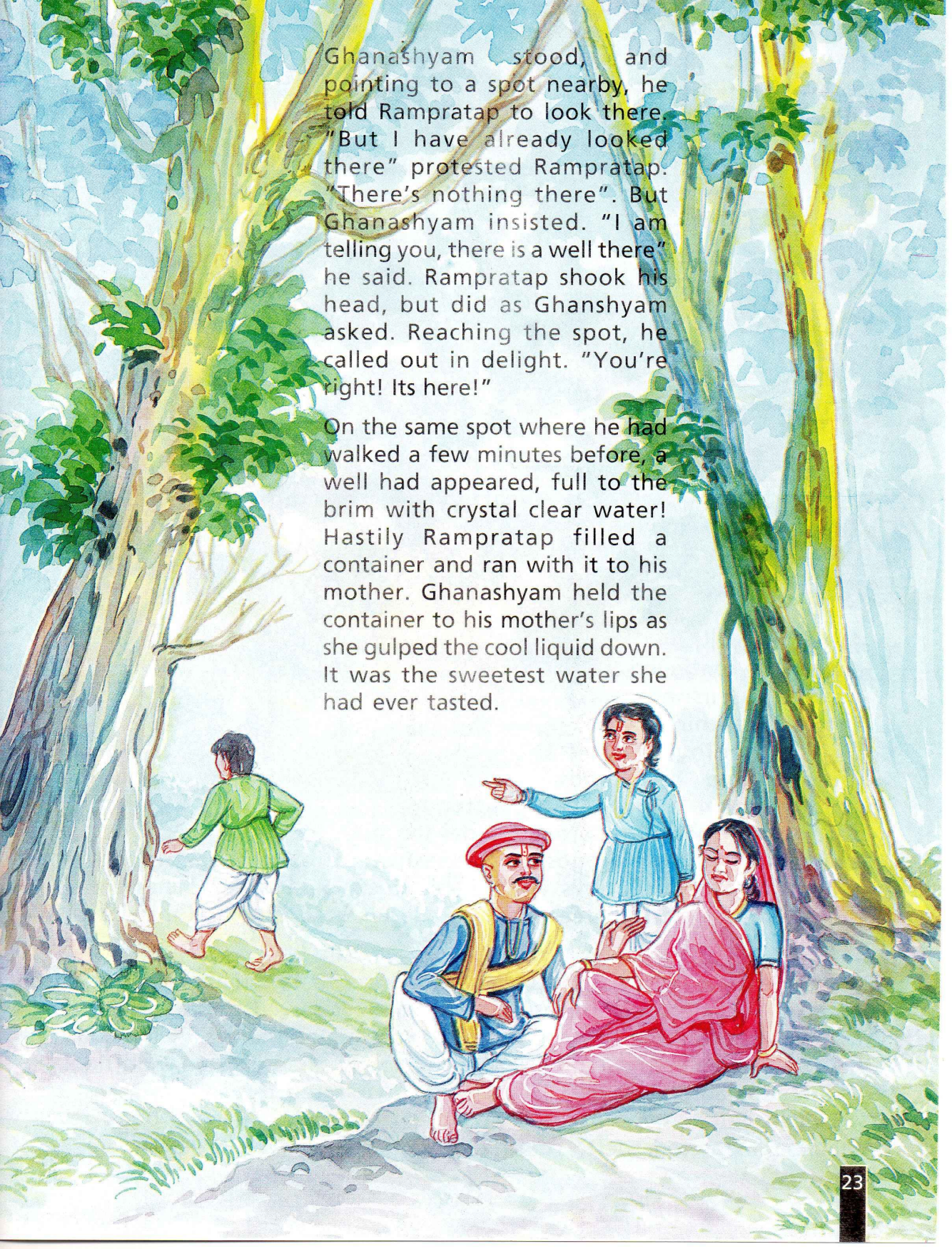
ON THE ROAD TO TARGAM

One day, the father-in-law of Rampratap, Baldev Prashad, invited Ghanashyam's family for his son's sacred thread ceremony, at his village of Targam. This is a very important ceremony for young boys. It signifies that they have learnt the scriptures and earned the right to be called a brahmin.



After a few days, Dharmadev, Bhaktimata, Rampratapbhai and Ghanashyam set out on foot for the village of Targam. It was a hot day, and the road was dusty. After several hours they became tired and thirsty. Coming to a small forest, they decided to take rest under the shade of the trees. Bhaktimata sat down wearily, leaning against a big tree. The long walk had made her very weak, and she asked Rampratap to go and find some water for her.

Rampratap went off into the forest in search of a well or a pond. He searched high and low, but there was not a drop of water to be found anywhere. Dejected, he returned to his family. By now, Bhaktimata was getting weaker. Dharmadev and Ghanshyam were trying to cool her down by fanning her with a cloth. Everyone was worried about her.



Ghanashyam stood, and pointing to a spot nearby, he told Rampratap to look there. "But I have already looked there" protested Rampratap. "There's nothing there". But Ghanashyam insisted. "I am telling you, there is a well there" he said. Rampratap shook his head, but did as Ghanashyam asked. Reaching the spot, he called out in delight. "You're right! Its here!"

On the same spot where he had walked a few minutes before, a well had appeared, full to the brim with crystal clear water! Hastily Rampratap filled a container and ran with it to his mother. Ghanashyam held the container to his mother's lips as she gulped the cool liquid down. It was the sweetest water she had ever tasted.



After the family had rested they continued on their journey to Targam. Reaching there in the evening, Baldev Prashad and his family greeted them warmly. Later, after a hearty meal, they all sat around under the stars, telling stories and exchanging gossip. Ghanashyam thrilled them all with his knowledge of the scriptures. He was able to explain to them the essence of the four Vedas, the eighteen Puranas, the Bhagvad Gita, and many, many more.

Baldev Prashad was astounded, and suggested to Dharmadev that it was also time for his son, Ghanashyam, to have his sacred thread ceremony. Bhaktimata protested. "No, he is still too young. And besides, I want him to have his ceremony at Ayodhya." But Baldev Prashad insisted, and finally Dharmadev agreed. "We will have a second sacred thread ceremony at Ayodhya. But tomorrow, let Ghanashyam and Laxmi Prashad both have their ceremony together!" That night, hardly anyone could get any sleep,

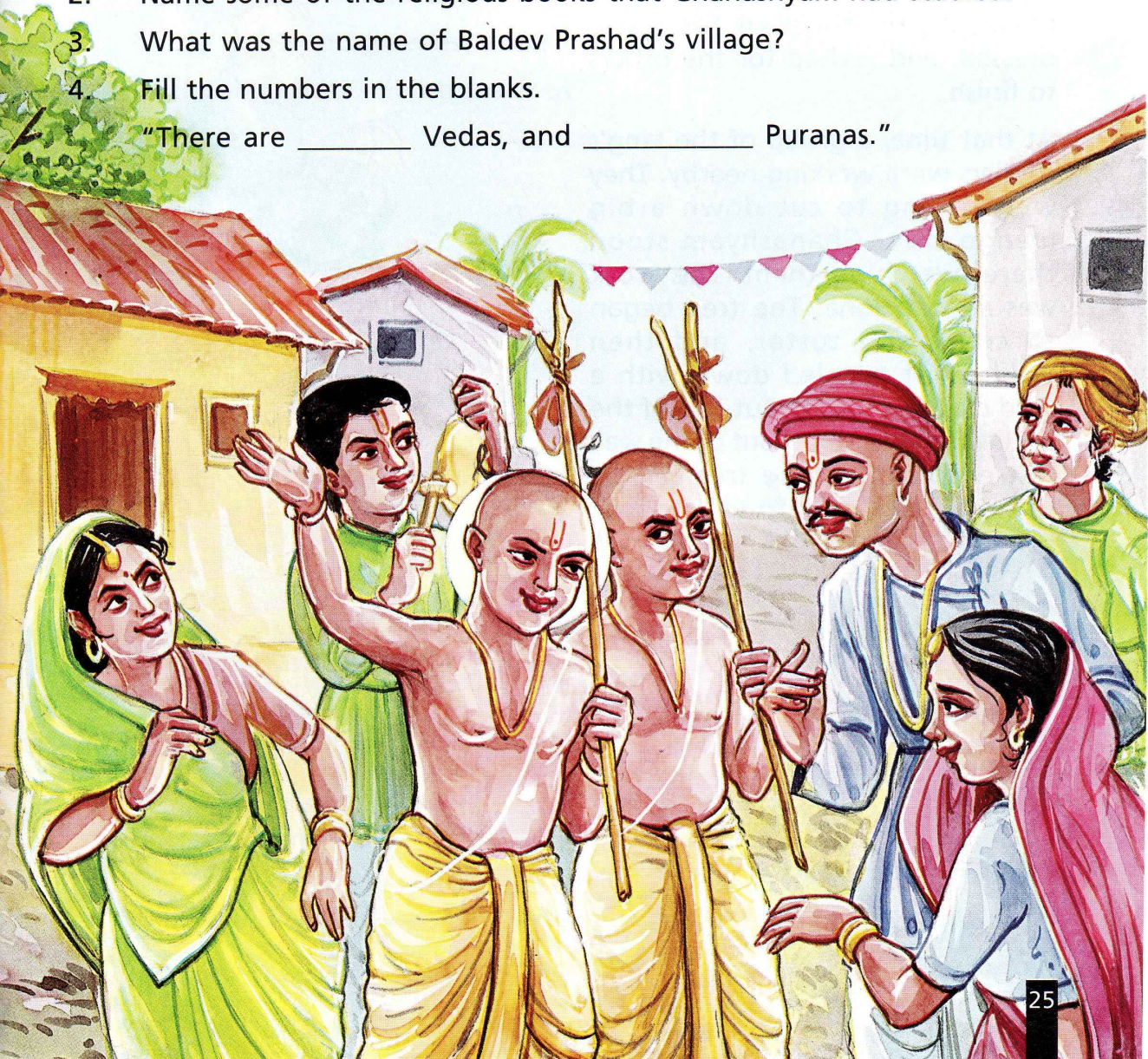
as they were all so excited.

The next day, the sacred thread ceremony of the two boys took place. It was a grand occasion, and people came from far and wide to see it. Many brahmins were gathered there, the air filled with their chants. And high above, in the heavens, all the gods and goddesses smiled and looked down, scattering flower petals from the sky, and filling the air with the sweet scent of blossoms

STUDY:

1. What is the sacred thread ceremony?
2. Name some of the religious books that Ghanashyam had studied.
3. What was the name of Baldev Prashad's village?
4. Fill the numbers in the blanks.

"There are _____ Vedas, and _____ Puranas."



THE KING'S SOLDIERS

It was a few days before Ghanashyam's sacred thread ceremony. Throughout the day, all the family had been shopping in the city of Ayodhya for all the things for the ceremony. As the sun went down they decided to take a bath at the pond near the ashram, where they were staying.

Ghanashyam finished his bath, dressed, and waited for the others to finish.

At that time, a group of the king's soldiers were working nearby. They were trying to cut down a big mango tree. Ghanashyam stood there, watching them. The work was almost done. The tree began to creak and totter, and then suddenly it toppled down with a loud cracking sound. But five of the soldiers could not get out of the way fast enough, and the tree fell on them, pinning them to the ground!

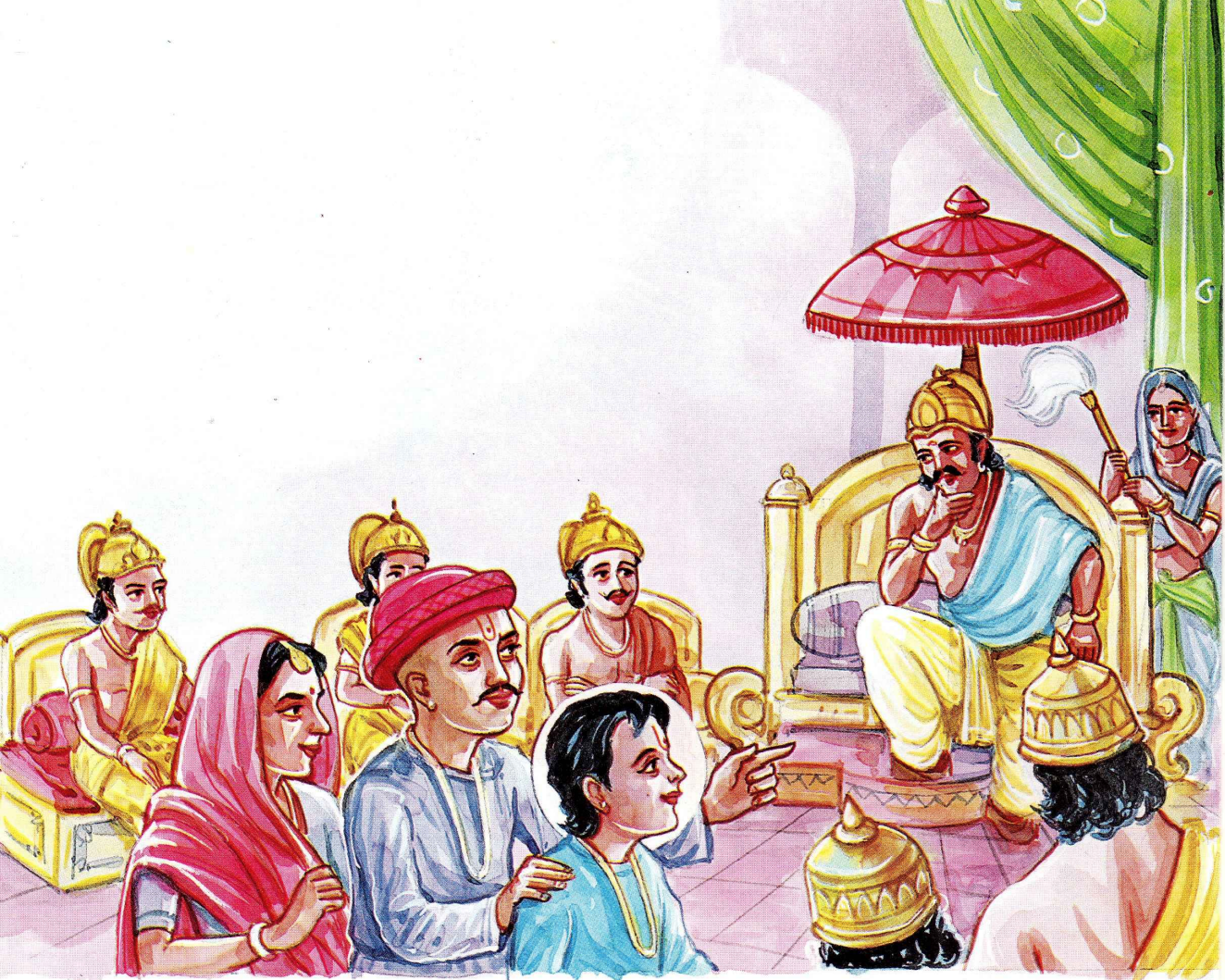




Ghanashyam came running. The poor trapped men were moaning and groaning. The other soldiers tried to lift the tree from their friends, but it was far too heavy for them. Then Ghanashyam stepped forward. Picking up a small cane, he pushed it under the tree. Then, with the strength of a hundred soldiers, he levered the big tree up! The five soldiers scrambled out quickly, and crowding round Ghanashyam, they praised his strength.

When the soldiers told their king about the incident, he summoned Ghanashyam and his family to appear before him in his court. He wanted to meet this strong man, Ghanashyam, and give him a reward.

The next day, Ghanashyam and his family came to meet the king. The king asked them "Which one of you is Ghanashyam?" The little Ghanashyam stepped forward. The king raised his eyebrows and laughed. "Impossible! The man who helped my soldiers had the strength of an elephant. You are only a small boy." he said.



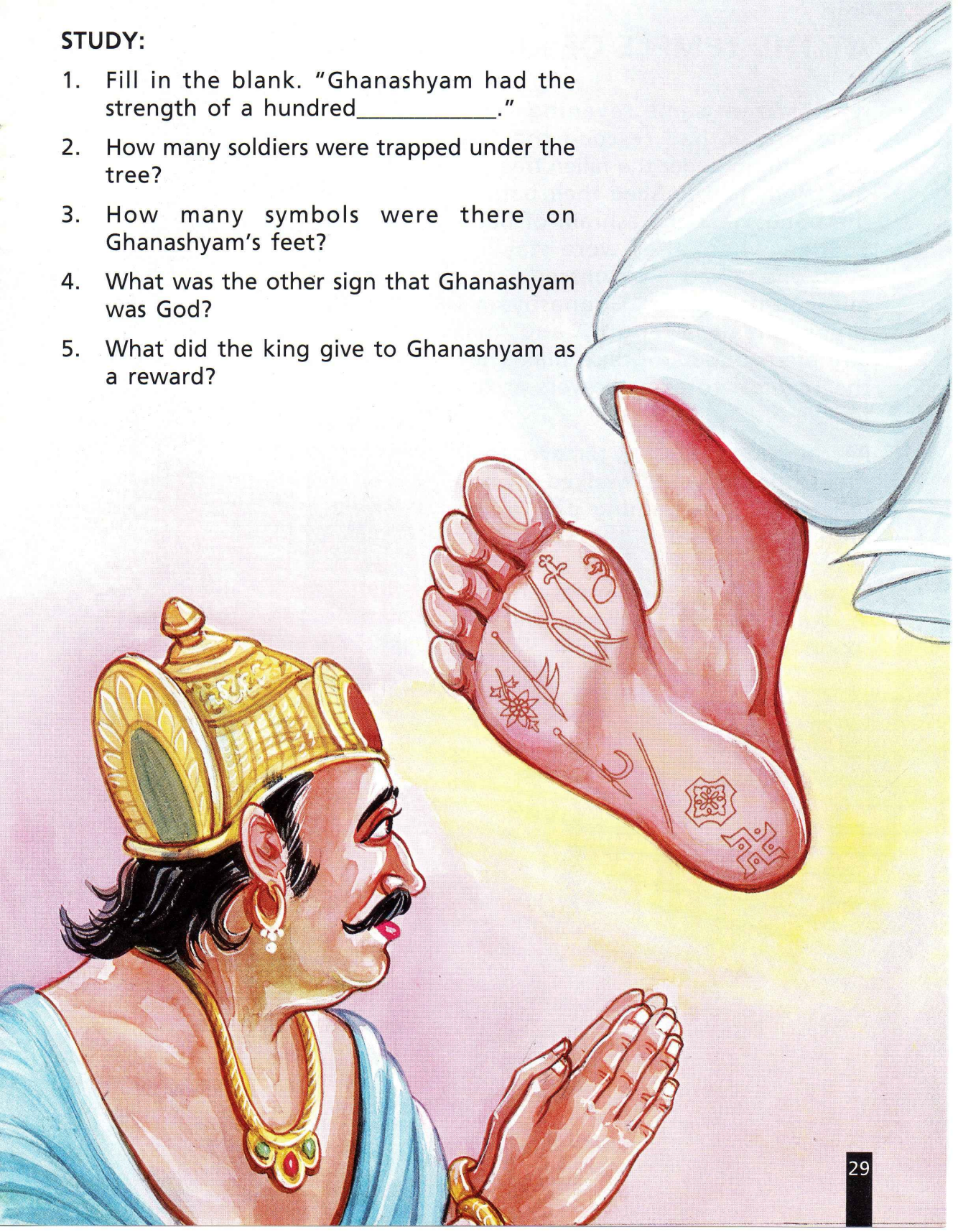
Then Dharmadev humbly explained to the king that although Ghanashyam was indeed a small boy, he was also God, and nothing was impossible for him. The king frowned. "So you are trying to tell me that your son is lord Ramchandraji?" he asked. "Very well, if he is indeed lord Ramchandraji, he will have sixteen symbols on his feet, and when he walks he will not cast a shadow. Come. Show me!"

Ghanashyam walked slowly toward the king. The king gasped. There was no shadow around Ghanashyam! Then Ghanashyam showed him the soles of his feet. There were the sixteen symbols!

Humbled, the king bent down and touched Ghanashyam's feet in reverence. Now he knew who Ghanashyam really was, and thanking him for saving his soldiers, he rewarded Ghanashyam with a shirt of silk, an embroidered coat, and a necklace of fine pearls.

STUDY:

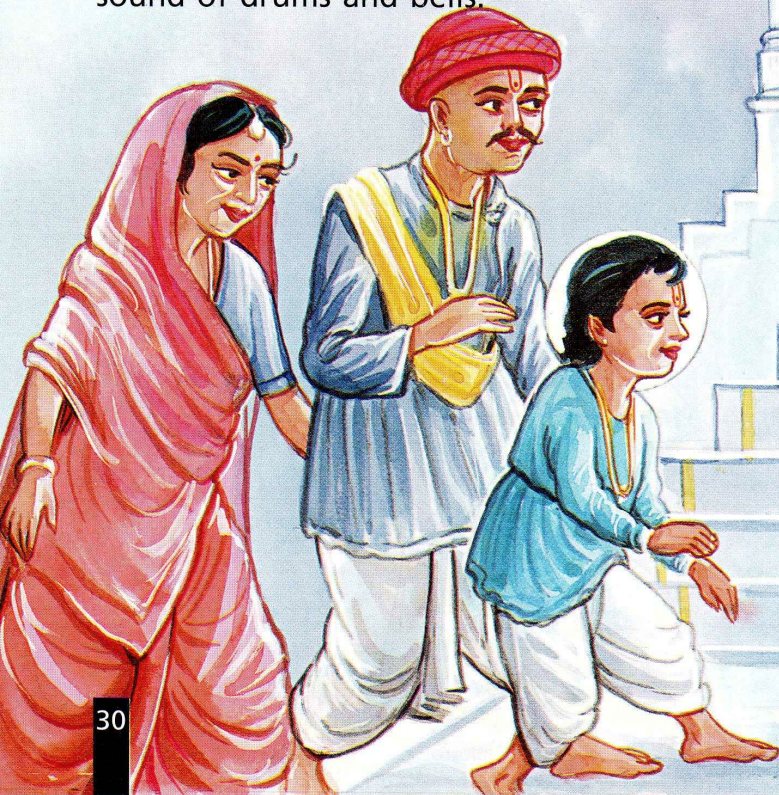
1. Fill in the blank. "Ghanashyam had the strength of a hundred _____."
2. How many soldiers were trapped under the tree?
3. How many symbols were there on Ghanashyam's feet?
4. What was the other sign that Ghanashyam was God?
5. What did the king give to Ghanashyam as a reward?



AT THE TEMPLE OF KRISHNA

It was the same evening that Ghanashyam had rescued the five soldiers from under the fallen tree. All the family had finished their bath in the pond, near the ashram of Babu Sunder, where they were staying. Everyone had witnessed the miraculous feat of Ghanashyam's super-human strength, and had gathered round to praise him. They then set off to offer prayers at the temple of Lord Krishna.

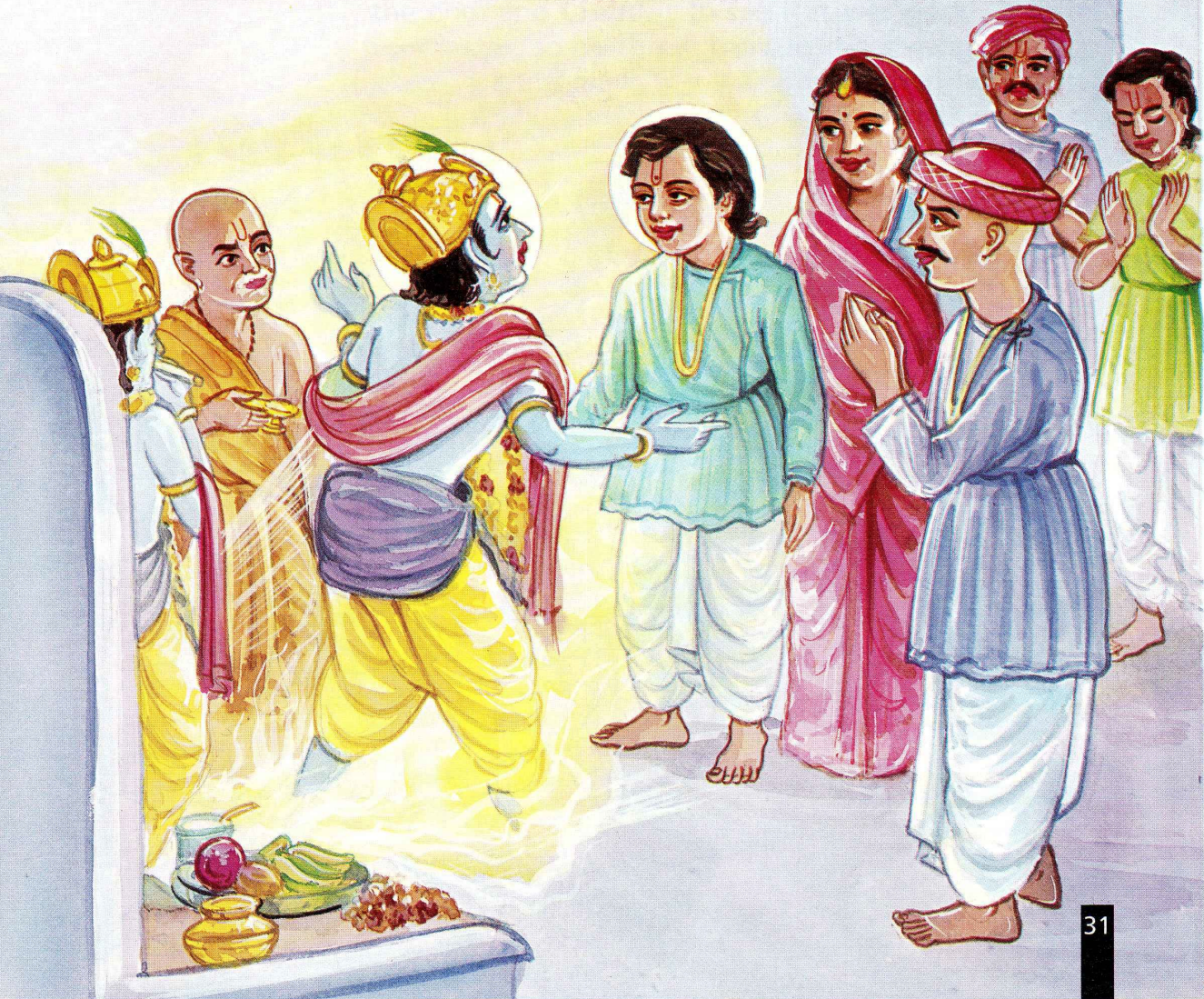
Reaching Kunjgalli, they removed their shoes, then devoutly walked around the temple, performing parikrama. Then they climbed the steps and entered the temple. The temple was crowded with many devotees, and the air was filled with incense, and the sound of drums and bells.



Ghanashyam moved toward the altar, as the priest was performing aarti. The oil lamp lit up the face of the idol of Shri Krishna. Ghanashyam stood there, transfixed by the sight of the statue, his eyes filled with devotion.

Then, as he stared, the statue began to move! Lord Krishna began to get up from his throne, and grow, and grow! Everyone gasped. Even the priest fell back astonished. Gone was the statue, and there in its place stood the full form of Lord Krishna, alive and beautiful, and smiling at the young boy Ghanashyam!

Lord Krishna bowed his head, and folded his hands in pranam at Ghanashyam. Then, stepping forward, he came right up to Ghanashyam, knelt, and touched his feet in reverence. Ghanashyam smiled, and raised his hand in blessing over Lord Krishna. Krishna looked at Ghanashyam with love in his eyes. Then slowly, as the crowd continued to stare, he went back to his throne, and resumed the form of the idol again.



Suddenly, everyone began to call outloudly. "Jai Shri Krishna! Jai Shri Ghanashyam!" It was truly a miracle they had witnessed, and all bowed down before Ghanashyam and touched his feet.

STUDY:

1. Whose ashram were Ghanashyam and his family staying at?
2. What is "parikrama"?
3. What is "aarti"?
4. What did Lord Krishna do to Ghanashyam?
5. What did the crowd call out?



