

|| Shree Swaminarayano Vijaytetram ||

SHREE
GHANASHYAM
BAL CHARITRA
PART - 8

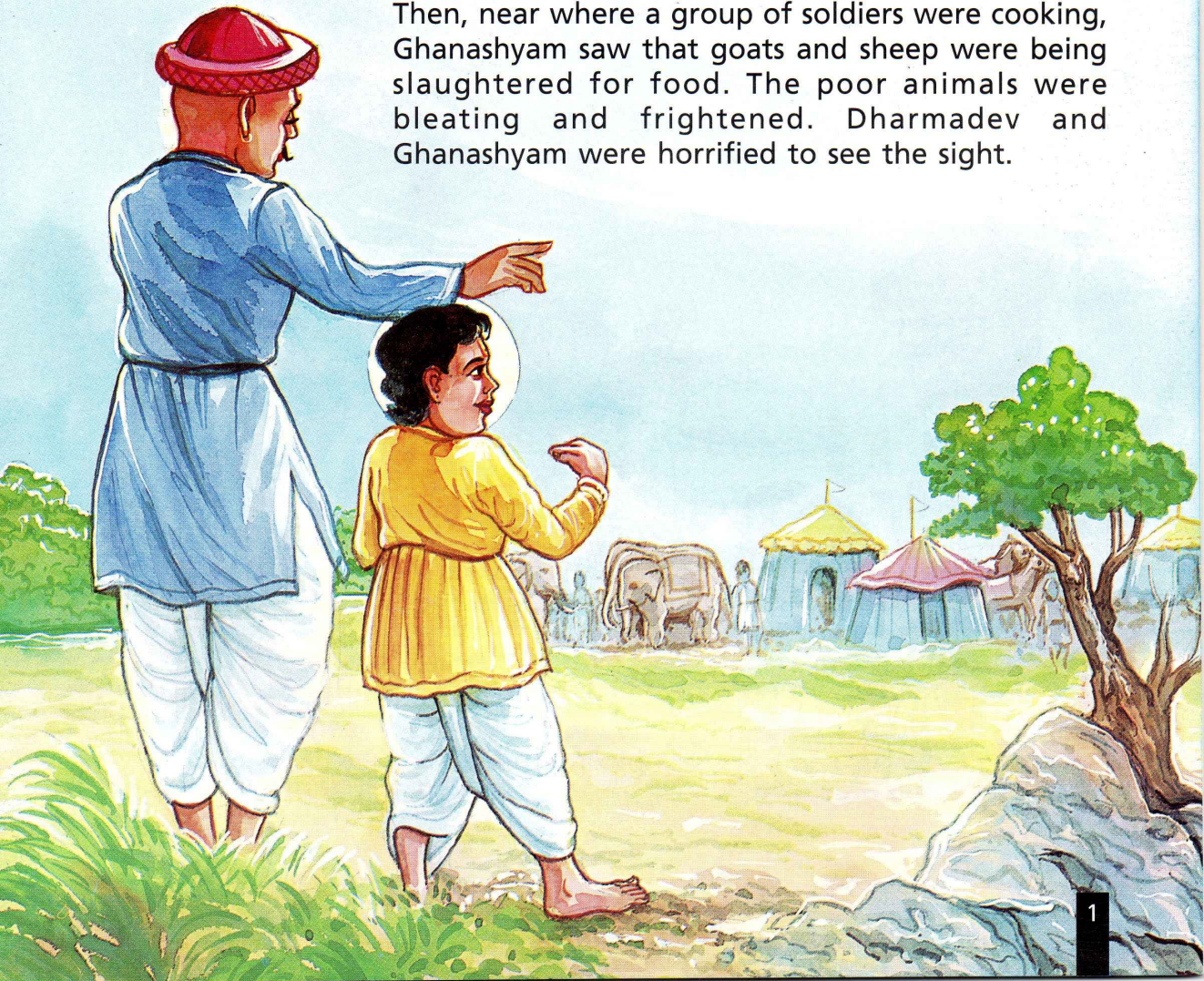


IN THE SOLDIERS' CAMP

Dharmadev had two brothers who were soldiers in the Nawab's army. One day Dharmadev and Ghanashyam went to visit them. The army was camped in a huge park called Badki Gardens. There were many tents for the soldiers and the king, and there were rows of horses and elephants tied up. Guarding the entrance to the camp was a huge soldier called Gurbax.

Dharmadev and Ghanashyam approached the entrance and introduced themselves. Gurbax knew Dharmadev's brothers, and let them both enter. Inside the camp everyone was busy. Some soldiers were sharpening their swords, some were attending to the elephants, some were shoeing the horses, others were cooking. Everywhere there was hustle and bustle. It was all so new and exciting for the young Ghanashyam.

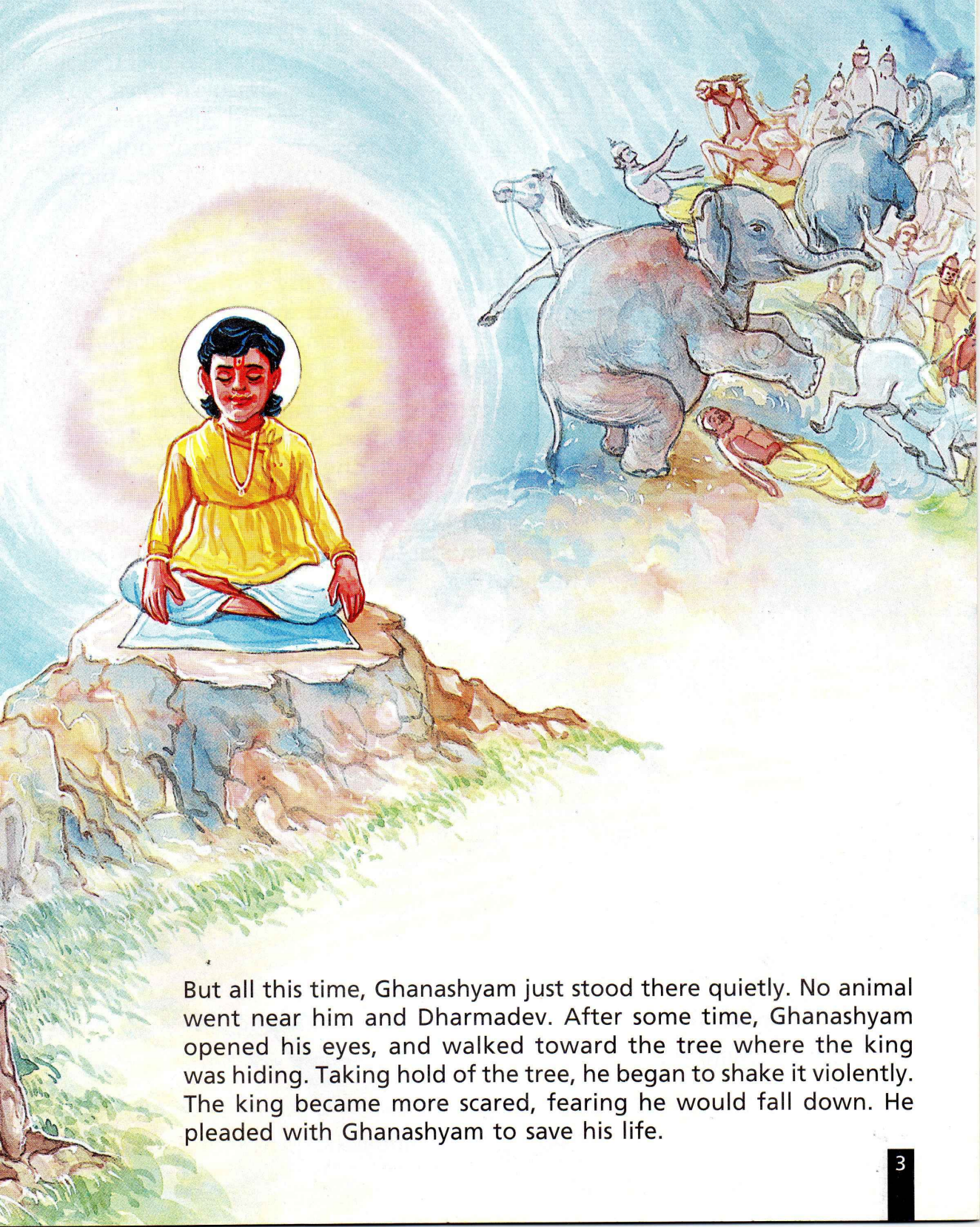
Then, near where a group of soldiers were cooking, Ghanashyam saw that goats and sheep were being slaughtered for food. The poor animals were bleating and frightened. Dharmadev and Ghanashyam were horrified to see the sight.



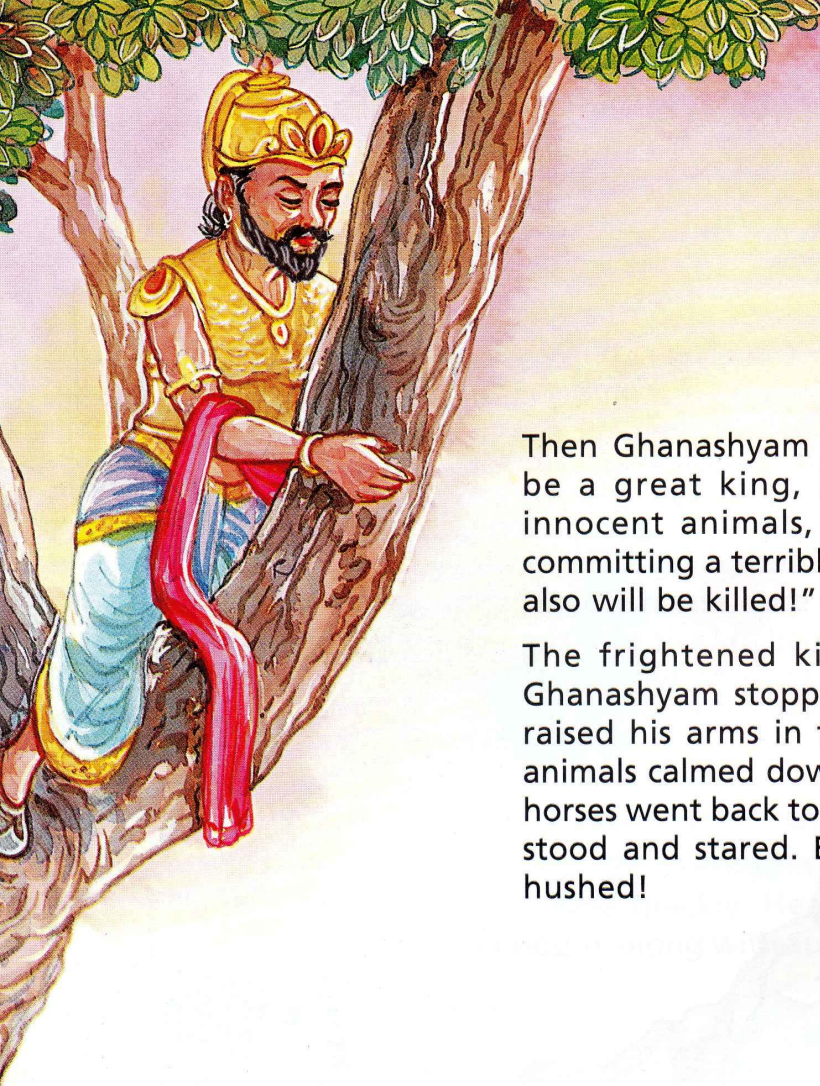
Ghanashyam closed his eyes and began to meditate. As he did so, the elephants and horses began to get restless. They began to trumpet and whinny, stamping their feet. Wilder and wilder they became. Then one elephant broke free from its chains. Then another, and another, and another. The horses broke free from their ropes, and began to jump around wildly. It was chaos.

The soldiers began to run hither and thither, trying to escape from the crazed animals. The king heard the commotion and came out of his tent. Seeing the animals going wild, he too panicked and ran for his life. He climbed a big tree, and sat there in the branches, shaking and scared, and calling out to God.





But all this time, Ghanashyam just stood there quietly. No animal went near him and Dharmadev. After some time, Ghanashyam opened his eyes, and walked toward the tree where the king was hiding. Taking hold of the tree, he began to shake it violently. The king became more scared, fearing he would fall down. He pleaded with Ghanashyam to save his life.



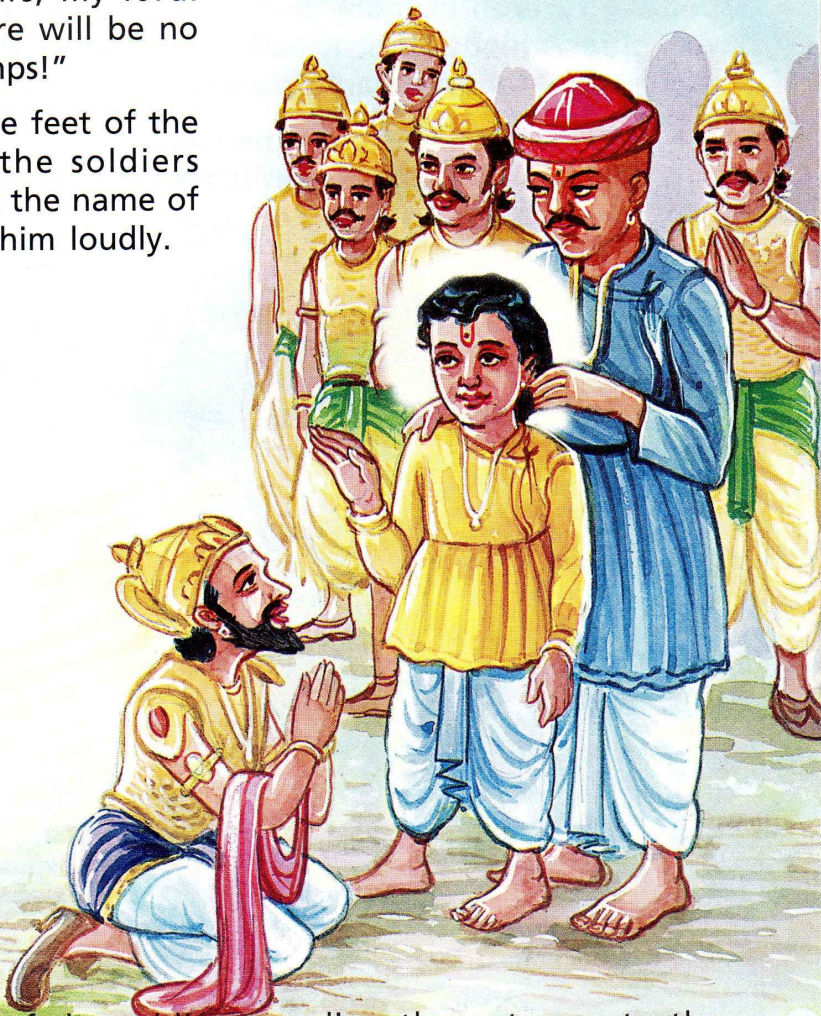
Then Ghanashyam spoke to him. "You may be a great king, but by killing all those innocent animals, you and your army are committing a terrible sin. Unless you stop, you also will be killed!"

The frightened king readily agreed. The Ghanashyam stopped shaking the tree, and raised his arms in the air. Suddenly, all the animals calmed down, and the elephants and horses went back to their rows. All the soldiers stood and stared. Everything was quiet and hushed!



Clambering down from the tree, the king threw himself at Ghanashyam's feet. Never had he seen such power - and that too from a young boy. Looking up at Ghanashyam, he spoke. "My power is nothing compared to yours, my lord. From this day forward there will be no killing of animals in my camps!"

Seeing the great king at the feet of the young Ghanashyam, all the soldiers gathered round, calling out the name of Ghanashyam, and praising him loudly.



STUDY:

1. What was the name of the soldier guarding the entrance to the soldier's camp?
2. What did Ghanashyam see in the camp that horrified him?
3. What did Ghanashyam do to save the animals from slaughter?
4. Where did the king run to when the animals went wild?
5. How did Ghanashyam quieten the animals down.
6. Why is it wrong to kill animals?

THE BAD TEMPERED ELEPHANT

Rampratap's father-in-law, Baldev Prasad, had an elephant. Elephants are very useful animals. When they are trained, they can perform all kinds of useful work, and they are also used for religious occasions. Elephants are specially revered in India. Baldev Prasad's elephant was a huge animal, with great strength, but it had a very mean temper. Even the elephant's keeper, the Mahavat, had difficulty controlling it.

One day, the Mahavat took the elephant down to the lake for his usual bath. Elephants love water, as it cools their thick skin down. Standing in the water, the elephant sucked up water through his trunk, and then



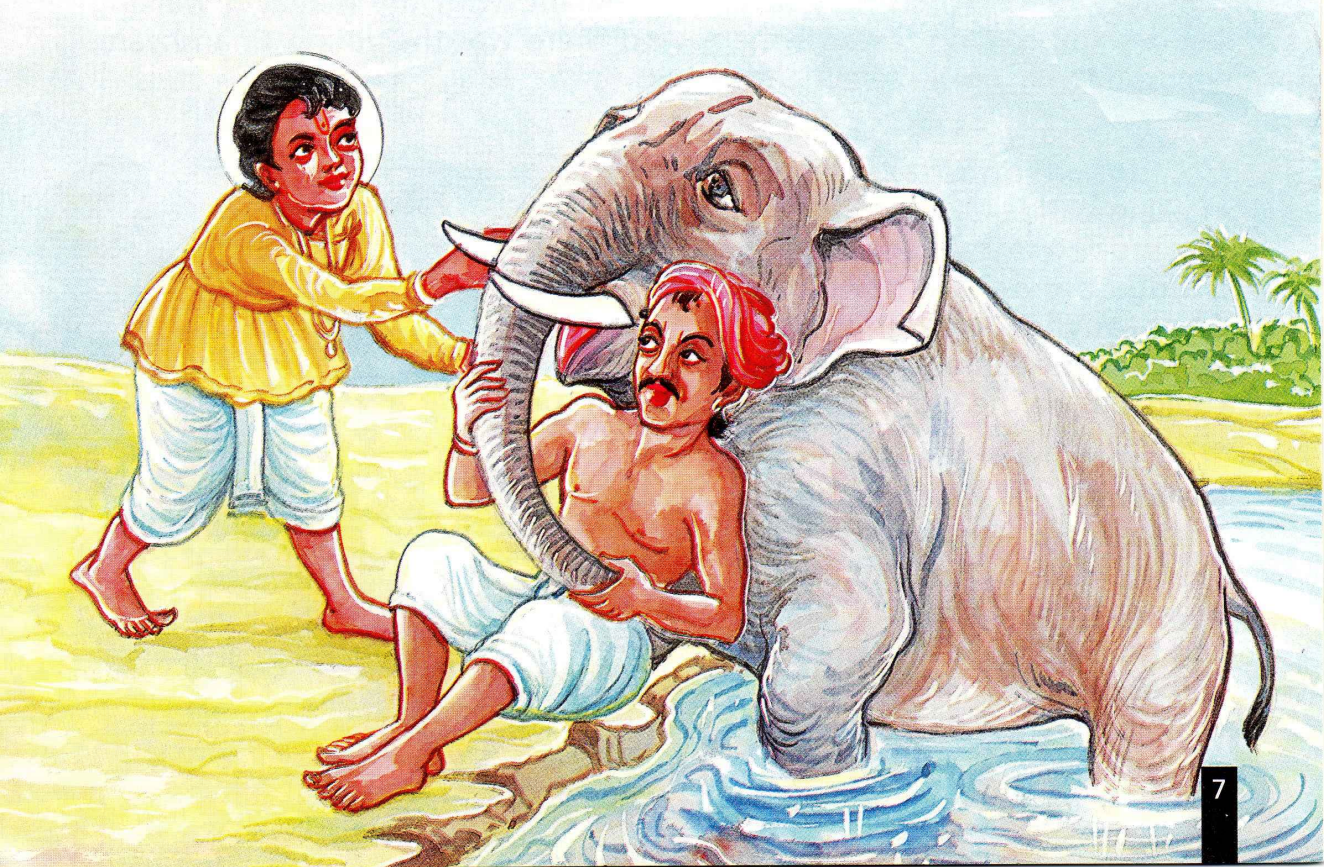
sprayed it all over himself. The Mahavat had a special stone which he rubbed over the elephants skin to clean it.

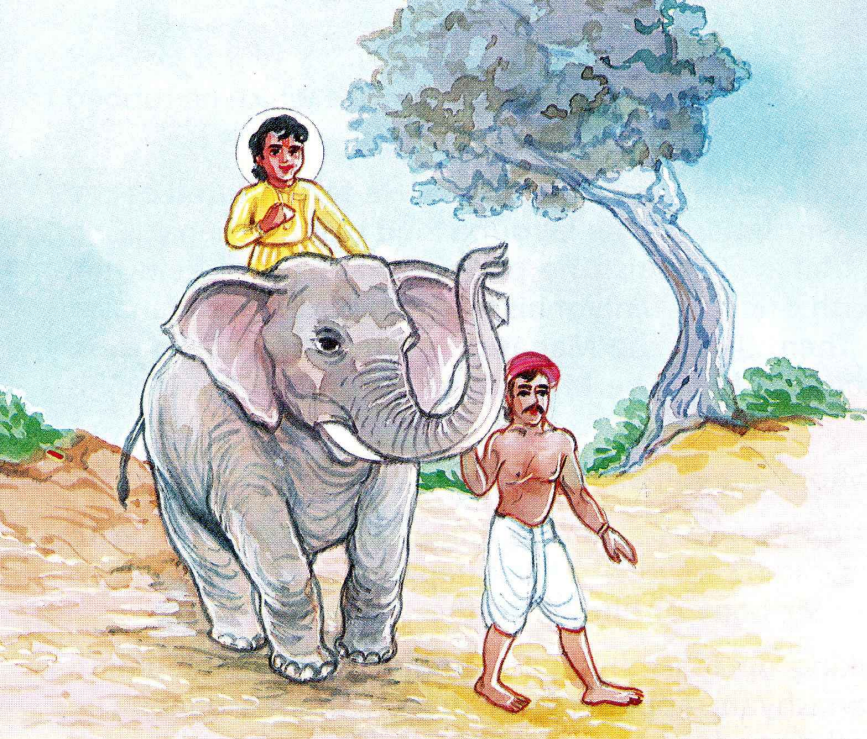
But this day, the elephant was in a very bad mood. He felt irritated as the Mahavat was cleaning him. Suddenly, he let out a loud bellow, then curling his trunk around the Mahavat's waist, he picked him up, and held him high in the air. Then, with a mighty fling of his trunk, he threw the Mahavat down into the water. Then, fixing the Mahavat with his angry little eyes, he began to charge towards him. The Mahavat called out in fear for his life.

Some village people who were watching, ran to call Baldev Prasad.

At that moment, Ghanashyam was sitting in Baldev Prasad's house. With his divine powers, he saw in his mind what was happening at the lake. In a flash, he projected another body of himself to the scene.

The Mahavat was looking up fearfully at the angry, charging elephant. Suddenly, young Ghanashyam appeared on the elephant's back! The Mahavat's jaw dropped open in astonishment. The Ghanashyam leaned forward and touched the elephant's head. Instantly, the elephant calmed down. Slowly he moved toward the Mahavat, picked him out of the water, and gently set him down on the bank of the lake.





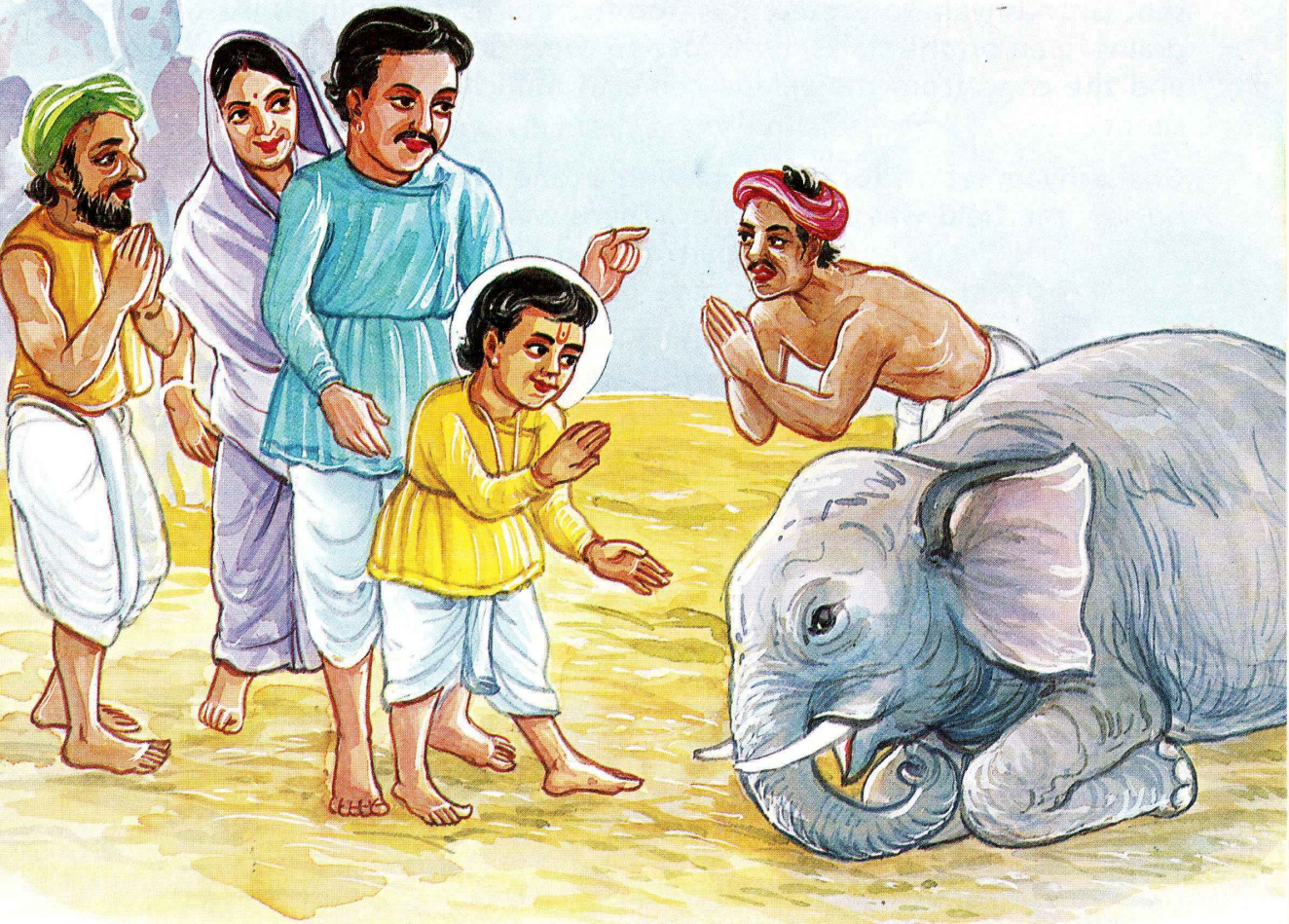
Meanwhile, the village people had reached Baldev Prasad's house. When he heard that the elephant was running wild, Baldev Prasad and his family, along with Ghanashyam, immediately set off for the lake. They were only half way there, when they saw the elephant, with the Mahavat walking beside him, coming towards them. And there was the young Ghanashyam, riding happily on the elephant's back!

Baldev Prasad was astonished. He looked at Ghanashyam walking beside him. And then he looked at Ghanashyam riding on the elephant. Ghanashyam was in two places at the same time! How could this be, he wondered?

The elephant and the Mahavat approached Ghanashyam standing beside Baldev Prasad. The Mahavat bowed reverently before him, and touched his feet in praise and gratitude. Then the huge elephant went down on his



front knees, and bowing his gray head, he touched Ghanashyam's feet with his trunk. The image of the young Ghanashyam on his back suddenly disappeared, while the young Ghanashyam standing before him reached forward, and gently caressed the animal's trunk.



STUDY:

1. What is an elephant's keeper called?
2. How did the elephant's keeper clean him?
3. Fill in the blank. "Ghanashyam appeared in _____ places at once."
4. Why is an elephant a useful animal?
5. Can you name a god who looks like an elephant?

GHANASHYAM AND THE BIRDS

Dharmadev had a farm, and everyone in the family had to help out with the farm work. One year, as the rice was ripening in the fields, Dharmadev sent Ghanashyam to protect the crop from birds and animals. As the rice grains ripen on the stalks, birds love to come down and feast upon them, and the cows from the village come to munch on the succulent green shoots.

Ghanashyam set off for the farm, with a cane in his hand. Reaching there, he saw the field was full of birds. There were sparrows, and blackbirds, and parrots, and all kinds of other birds. There must have been a thousand of them.

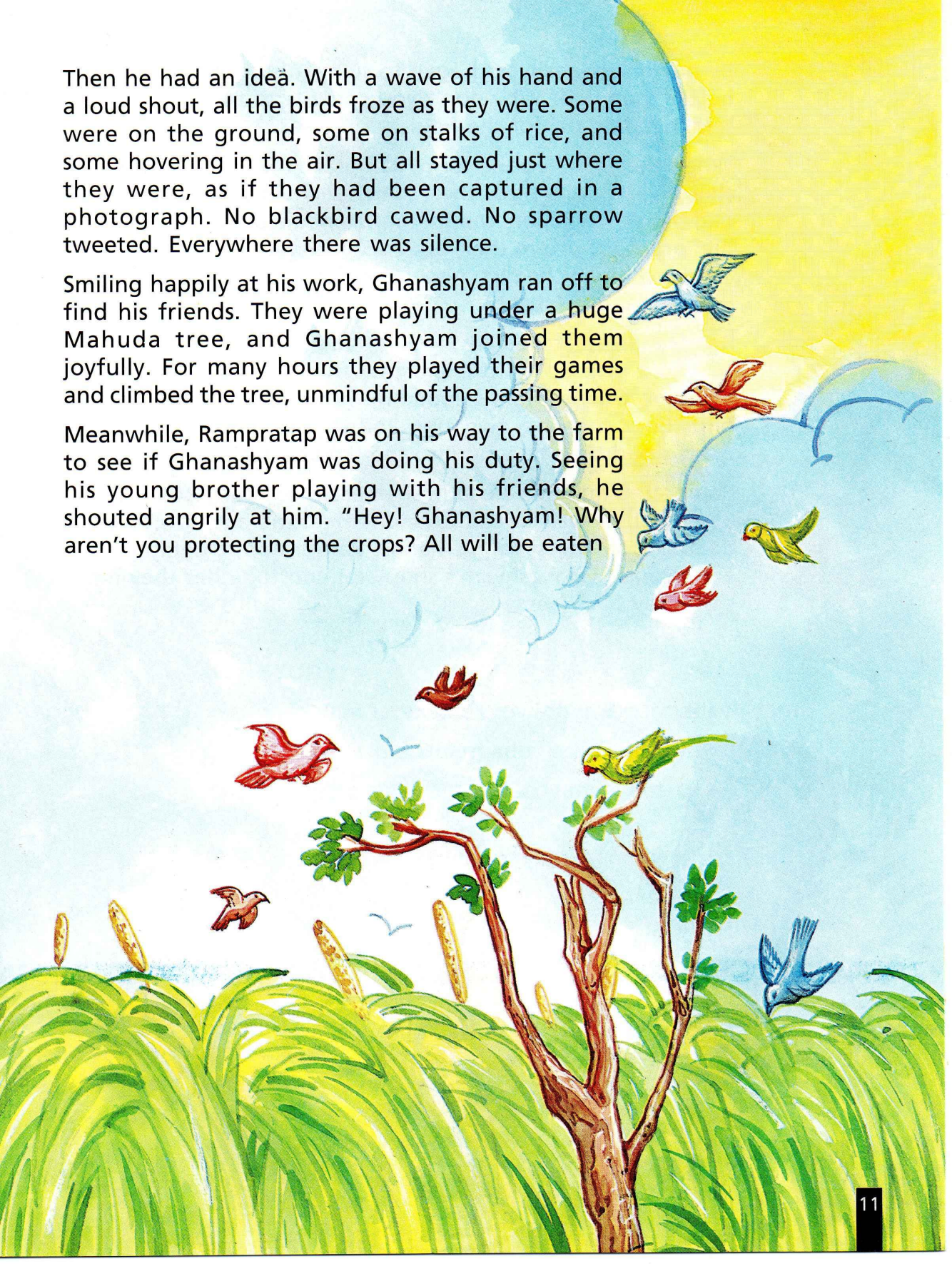
Ghanashyam was perplexed. He didn't know what to do. If he shooed the birds away, then all would go hungry. But if he didn't scare them away, they would eat all the rice up, and his father would be angry.



Then he had an idea. With a wave of his hand and a loud shout, all the birds froze as they were. Some were on the ground, some on stalks of rice, and some hovering in the air. But all stayed just where they were, as if they had been captured in a photograph. No blackbird cawed. No sparrow tweeted. Everywhere there was silence.

Smiling happily at his work, Ghanashyam ran off to find his friends. They were playing under a huge Mahuda tree, and Ghanashyam joined them joyfully. For many hours they played their games and climbed the tree, unmindful of the passing time.

Meanwhile, Rampratap was on his way to the farm to see if Ghanashyam was doing his duty. Seeing his young brother playing with his friends, he shouted angrily at him. "Hey! Ghanashyam! Why aren't you protecting the crops? All will be eaten



by now!" Ghanashyam began to sulk. "I have protected them better than you! Why don't you come with me and see." He said, heading off for the field.

When they reached the farm, Rampratap was astounded. Yes, there were many birds there. But they were all frozen. Some had their beaks open, caught in the middle of their song. Some had grains of rice in their beaks. Some were caught in the act of scratching in the dirt. And others just hung still in the air, as if suspended on strings!

Rampratap scratched his head in amazement. Then he bent down to pick up a little sparrow from the ground. At that moment, Ghanashyam clapped his hands. As he did so, all the birds burst into life, tweeting and cawing loudly, and in one giant cloud they flew up into the sky and far away.

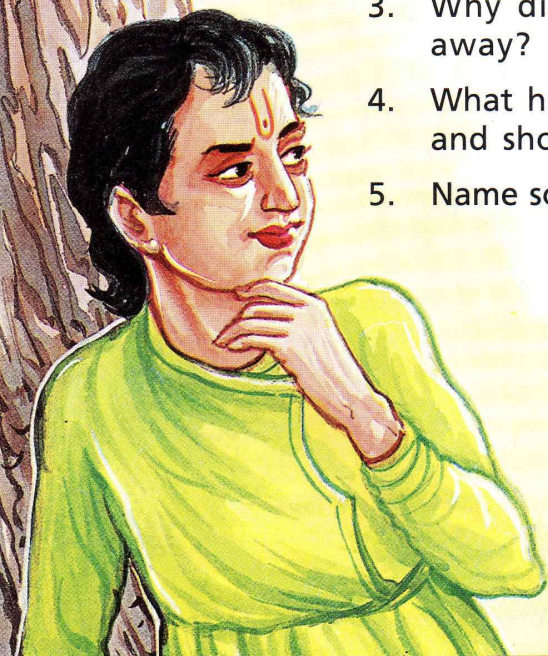
Rampratap hung his head in shame. He had forgotten that his little brother was indeed God, and held the power of life and death of all things in his hands. Rampratap lovingly put his arm around Ghanashyam's shoulder, and together they made their way back home.





STUDY:

1. What crop was growing in Dharmadev's farm?
2. What did Dharmadev ask Ghanashyam to do?
3. Why didn't Ghanashyam want to scare the bird away?
4. What happened when Ghanashyam raised his arms and shouted?
5. Name some of the birds that were on the farm.

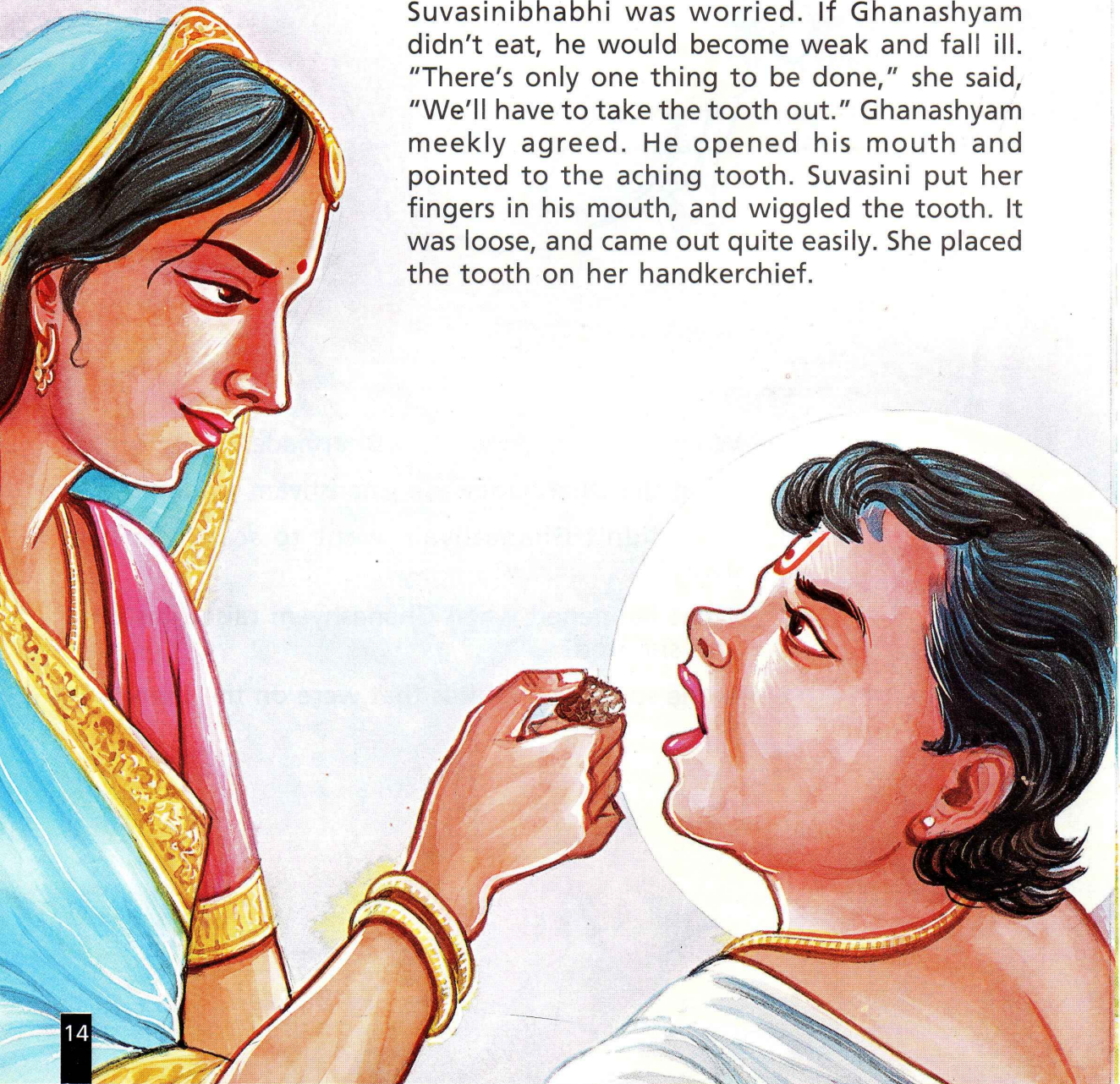


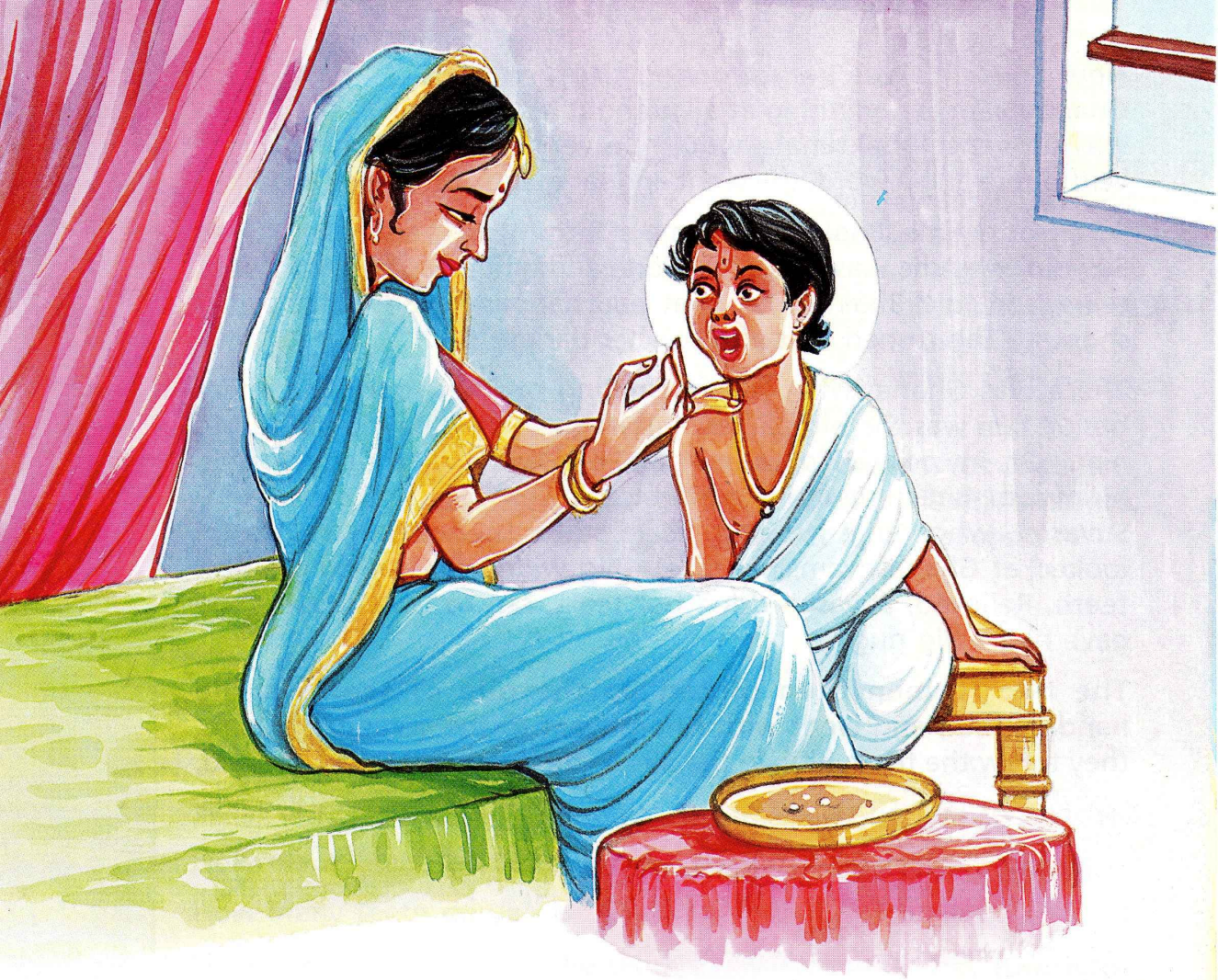
GHANASHYAM HAS A TOOTHACHE

I'm sure you know what it is like to have a toothache. It hurts so much, and makes us irritable, and it is so difficult to eat anything. Well, when Ghanashyam was still a small boy, he had toothache, just like you and me.

Once, when Ghanashyam had a very bad toothache, he couldn't eat his vegetables and chappaties. So his sister-in-law, Suvasinibhabhi, cooked him his favourite sweet - a dish of delicious soft halwa. But when Ghanashyam try to eat it, he yelled in pain. There was nothing he could eat.

Suvasinibhabhi was worried. If Ghanashyam didn't eat, he would become weak and fall ill. "There's only one thing to be done," she said, "We'll have to take the tooth out." Ghanashyam meekly agreed. He opened his mouth and pointed to the aching tooth. Suvasini put her fingers in his mouth, and wiggled the tooth. It was loose, and came out quite easily. She placed the tooth on her handkerchief.





"There!" she said. "Is that better?" But Ghanashyam shook his head. "No, Didi. The one next to it is also painful" he said, "Please take that one out too." Again Didi looked inside his mouth and felt the tooth. Sure enough, it was also loose, and came out easily in her fingers. She placed the tooth beside the other one on her handkerchief.

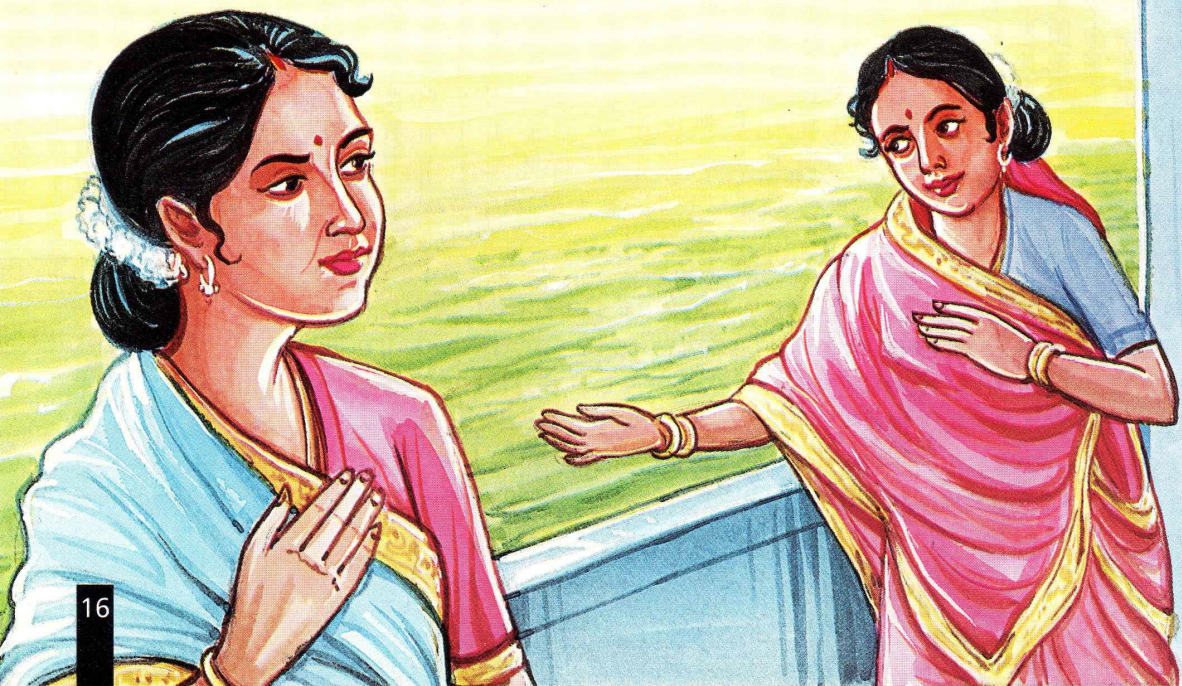
There now, I'm sure its better now" she said. But Ghanashyam again shook his head, and pointed to another painful tooth. Again, Suvasini took out the offending tooth, and placed it with the others. This went on until there was only one tooth left! Still, Ghanashaym complained that it was aching, and asked Suvasini to remove it. With a little tug, the last tooth came out, and joined the others on the handkerchief. It was a big pile of thirty-two teeth!

Now Suvasini was very worried. How would Ghanashyam eat anything at all without his teeth? She was sure that Bhaktimata would be very angry with her. Without saying a word, she went and sat quietly on the verandah.

After some time, Bhaktimata came out to the verandah, and asked Suvasini why she was sitting all alone and quiet. Suvasini burst into tears, and told Bhaktimata what had happened. Bhaktimata was shocked. She rushed inside to see her darling child.

There was Ghanashyam, sitting smiling on the floor. And there beside him was the big pile of thirty-two teeth. Bhaktimata ran to him. "Oh, my poor child. Let me see." she said, and tenderly opened his mouth. But there inside all the teeth were intact! She called for Suvasini, who came running, tears still in her eyes. As Suvasini looked at Ghanashyam, he gave a big wide grin, showing all his teeth. Relieved, Suvasini dried her tears, ran to Ghanashyam, and gave him a big hug.

The two women then picked up the pile of teeth in the handkerchief, and went with Ghanashyam to the verandah. There, they threw the teeth high in the air. As the teeth fell to the ground,





each one turned into a shining white pearl.

Then, as they watched, a flock of heavenly pure white swans flew down from the skies, and landed in front of the verandah. The divine swans gathered round the glistening pearls, squawking and screeching, and one by one picked up the pearls in their beaks, and swallowed them!

Then, turning towards Ghanshyam, they all bowed their heads in reverence, and flew back to the heavens.

STUDY:

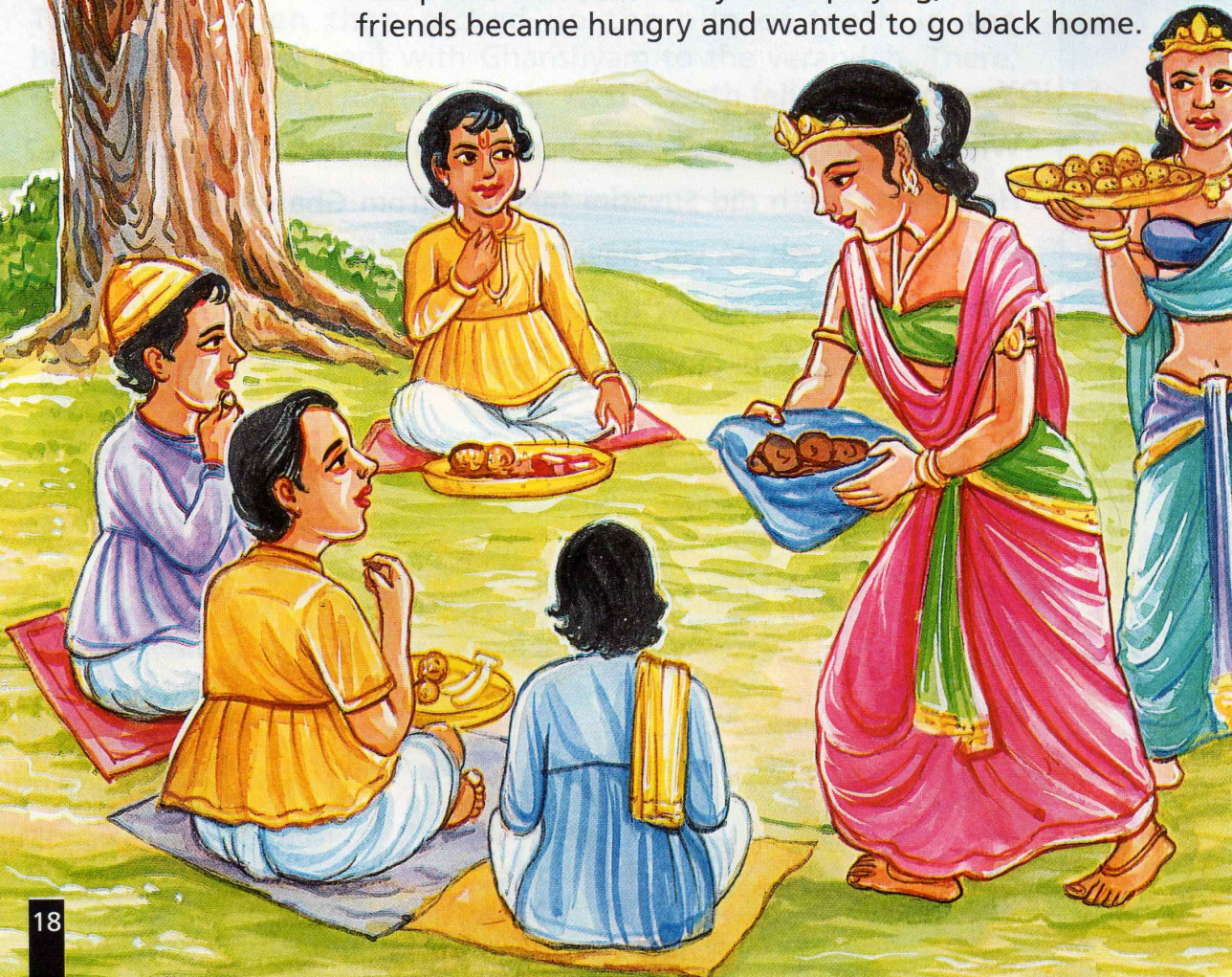
1. What did Suvasini cook for Ghanshyam when he had toothache?
2. How many teeth did Suvasini take out from Ghanshyam's mouth?
3. How many teeth do you have?
4. When Bhaktimata threw the teeth away, what did they turn into?
5. What kind of birds came down from heaven?



PRASAD OF GHANASHYAM

Food which is touched and blessed by God is called prasad. But God provides everything for us, so we can say that all food is prasad, and we should give thanks to God for it. There are many stories about Ghanashyam feeding people with his own hands, or through divine miracles. This is one of them.

When Ghanashyam was a small boy, he loved to play with his friends under the trees, and to swim in the rivers and lakes. One day he was playing with his friends under the shade of a big mahuda tree, near a fish pond. For hours they were playing, but then the friends became hungry and wanted to go back home.



But Ghanashyam wanted to play more, and to swim in the pond, and he was in no mood to go home just yet.

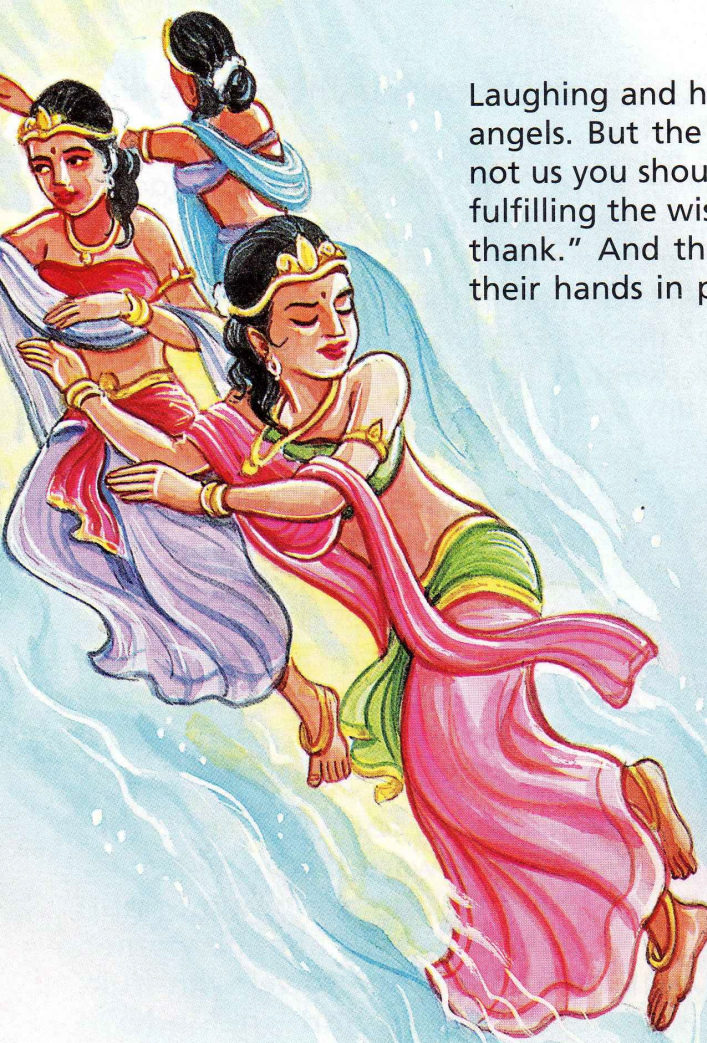
"If I feed you, will you play some more?" he asked. The boys looked around. There was no food to be seen anywhere. "How will you feed us?" they asked. Then Ghanashyam told them to tie a towel by its four corners in the tree. When the towel was tied in the branches, Ghanashyam told them to wait for a while for the food to come. Then pulling off his clothes, he said, "And while we're waiting, let's go for a swim!"



Ghanashyam dashed down to the pond and jumped in, while his friends quickly stripped off their clothes and followed him. For a long time the boys splashed and frolicked in the water. They were having so much fun, they forgot their hunger. But after some time the friends began to tire, and again they were feeling hungry.

Clambering out of the pond, they looked toward the mahuda tree. There was an astonishing sight! Eight holy and angelic women were filling the towel with fruits and sweets, and all kinds of delicious things to eat! Seeing Ghanashyam approaching with his friends, they bowed their heads respectfully to him. "Lord, we are here to feed you." One of them said.

Then Ghanashyam, with his friends, sat on the ground, and the divine women fed them all with heavenly food on golden plates. The boys had never tasted such food before. Every mouthful was more delicious than the last. Soon their little bellies were bulging, and they could eat no more.



Laughing and happy, they thanked the beautiful angels. But the women shook their heads. "It is not us you should thank," said one, "we are only fulfilling the wish of our Lord. It is He you should thank." And they turned to Ghanshyam, folded their hands in prayer, and disappeared.

STUDY:

1. What is prasad?
2. How did Ghanshyam get food for his friends?
3. How many angels came down to feed Ghanshyam and his friends?
4. Why did the food taste so delicious?
5. Who should we thank for our food?

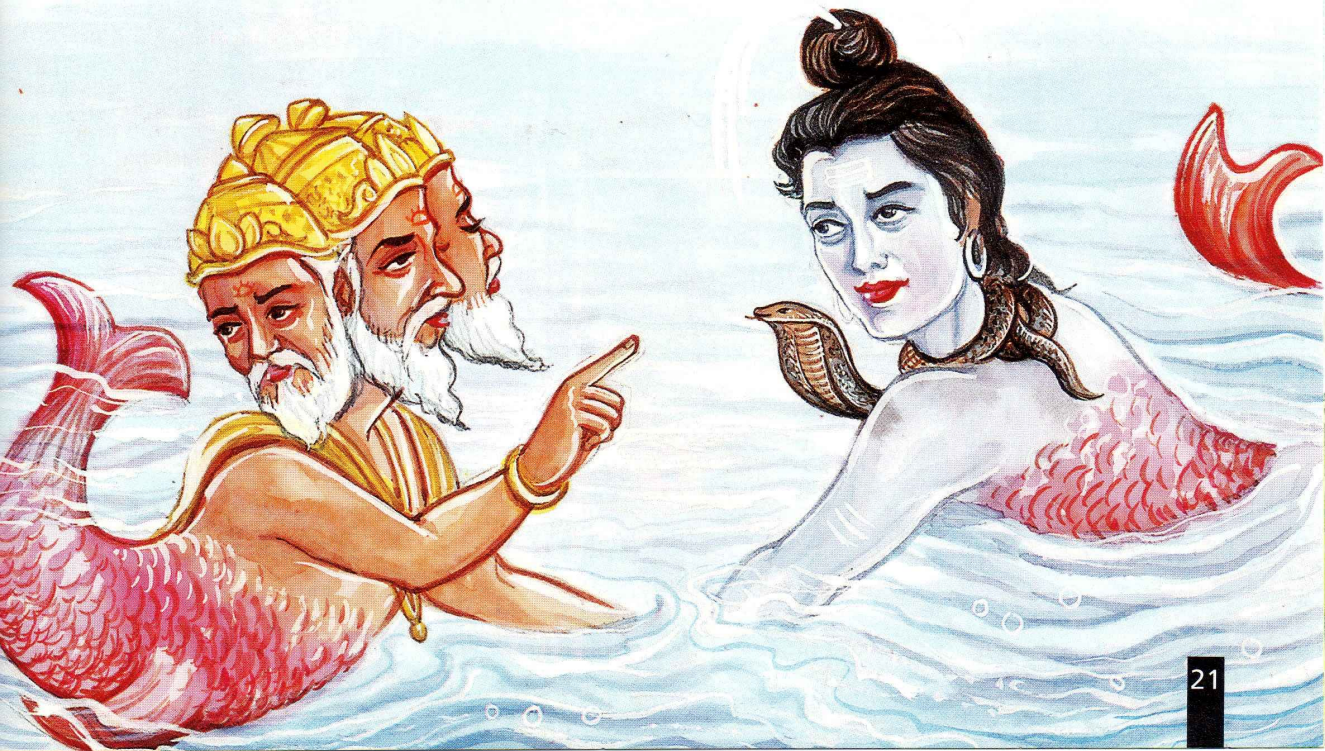


THE GODS WANT PRASAD!

It was the day that eight divine angels were feeding Ghanashyam and his friends by the fish pond. Sitting under the shade of the mahuva tree, the boys were enjoying themselves, eating the heavenly delicious food.

Watching this happy scene from their heavenly abode, the gods Brahma and Shiva were filled with joy to see their little Lord. They longed to taste prasad - food that had been blessed by the touch of Ghanashyam's hand. But how could they do this without letting his friends know who they were?

Then Brahma had an idea! They would enter the pond in the form of fish, and when Ghanashyam went to wash his hands after eating, they would be able to nibble on the scraps from his hands! In a flash, both the gods were little fish swimming in the pond, waiting anxiously for Ghanashyam to finish his meal.



Ghanashyam and his friends had had their fill. Rubbing their full little bellies, the friends stood up and headed for the pond to wash their hands. But Ghanashyam, being God, knows everything. He knew that Brahma and Shiva were waiting for him in the pond, and he wanted to play games with them.

"Stop!" he called to his friends. "There are crocodiles in the pond, and when they get the taste of food from our hands, they may come to eat us too!" The boys were scared. Then Ghanashyam took a bowl and scooped up water from the pond, and brought it to them to wash their hands in.

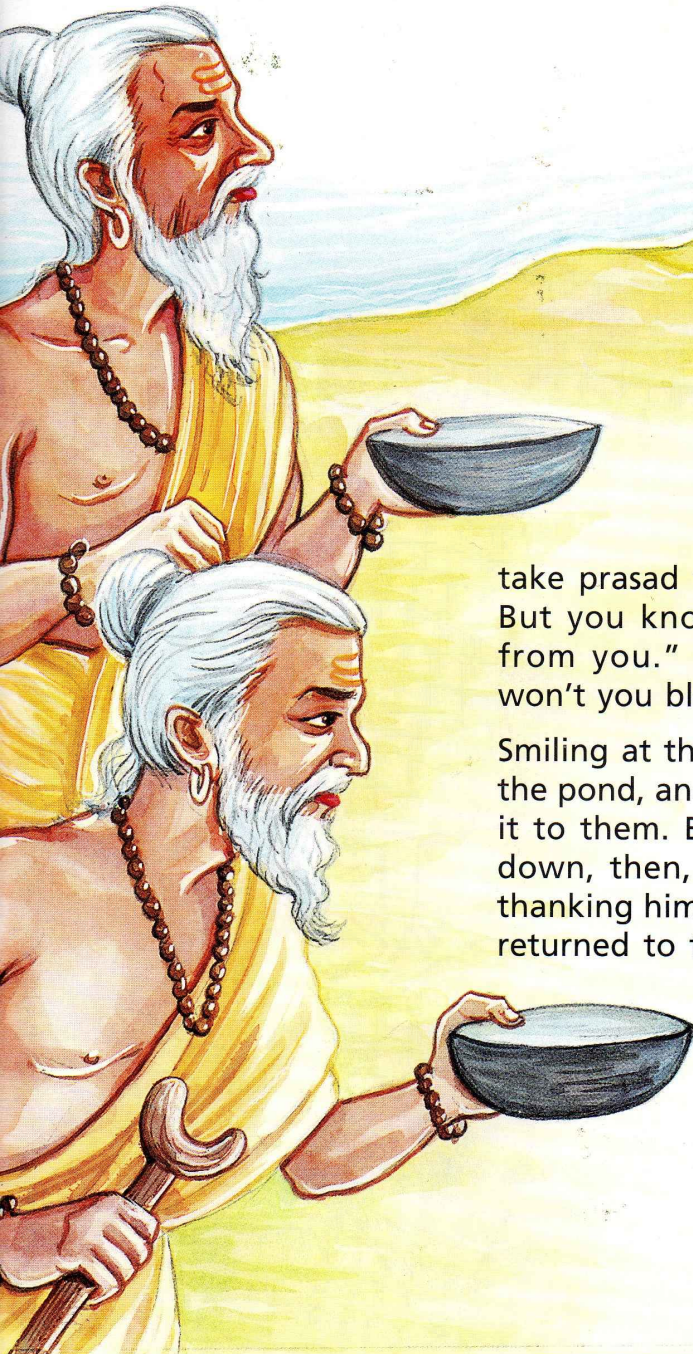
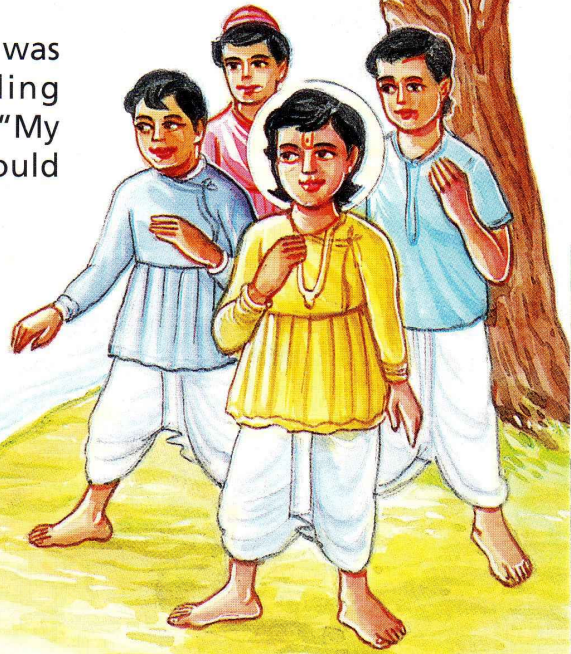
Brahma and Shiva, swimming as fish in the pond, heard all this. They had been tricked by Ghanashyam. "Now what can we do?" they thought. Then Shiva had an idea. "Let's take the form of holy men," he said, "and then we can beg for food from him."

In a flash the two gods appeared on the banks of the pond as sadhus, clutching their bowls for collecting food. Approaching Ghanashyam, they folded their hands in prayer, and asked for food. But Ghanashyam knew who they were, and wanted to continue to play games with them. "I'm



sorry," he said, "but we've finished all the food. You'll have to go to the village and ask the people there."

The gods then realized that Ghanashyam was just playing games with them. Smiling sheepishly, they resumed their true forms. "My Lord," said Brahma, "we thought we could

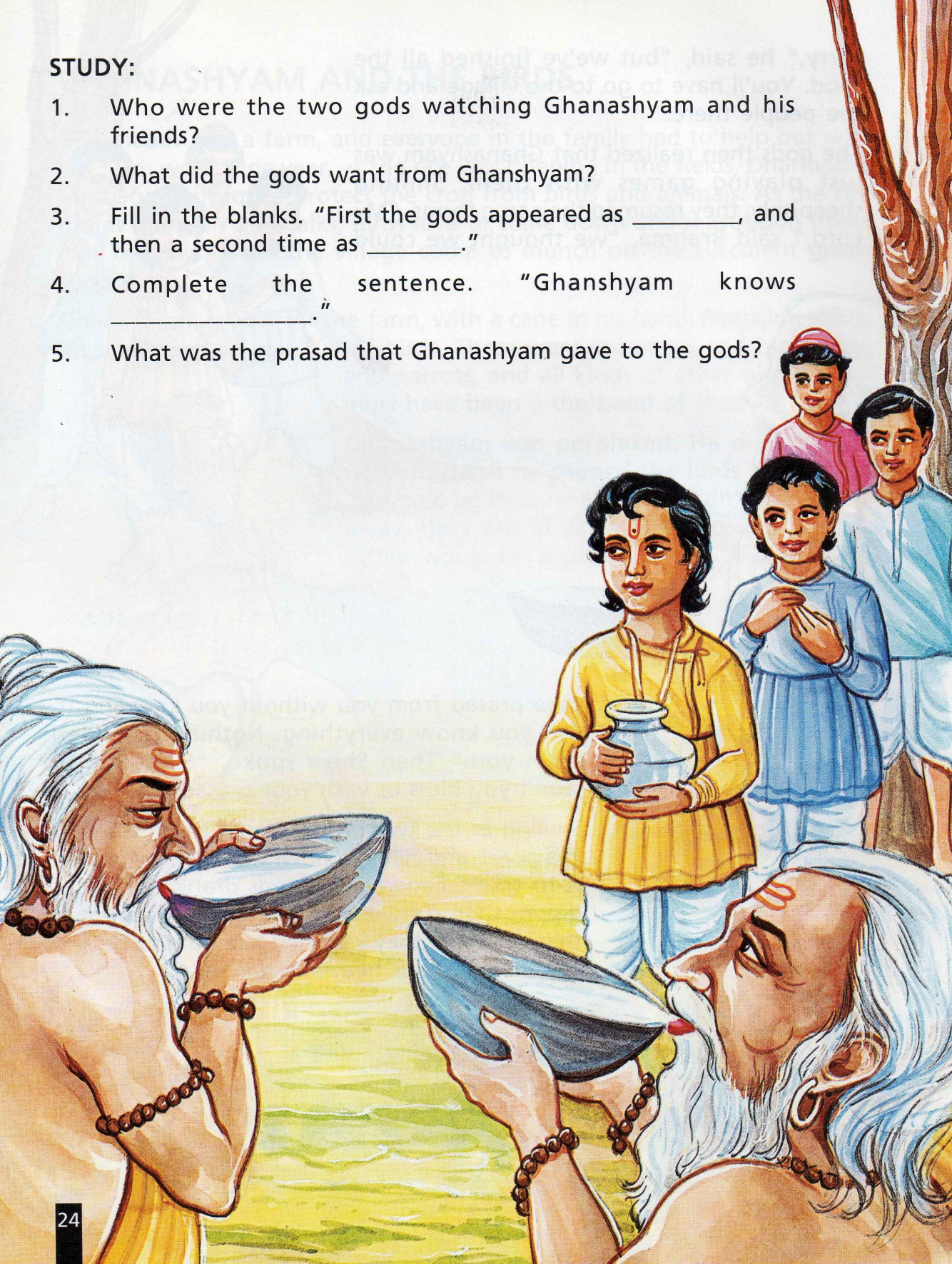


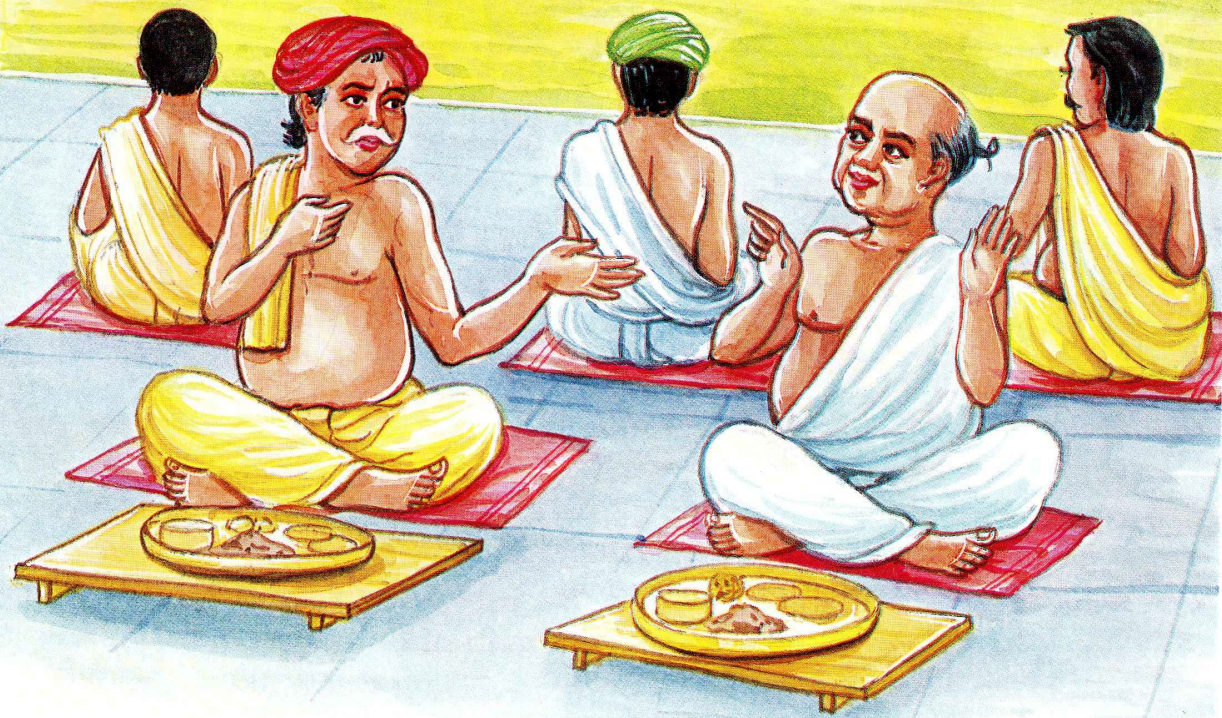
take prasad from you without you knowing it. But you know everything. Nothing is hidden from you." Then Shiva spoke. "Sweet Lord, won't you bless us with your prasad?"

Smiling at the two gods, Ghanashyam went to the pond, and filling a bowl with water, handed it to them. Eagerly, the gods drank the water down, then, bowing before Ghanashyam and thanking him, they vanished from the scene and returned to their heavenly abode.

STUDY:

1. Who were the two gods watching Ghanashyam and his friends?
2. What did the gods want from Ghanashyam?
3. Fill in the blanks. "First the gods appeared as _____, and then a second time as _____."
4. Complete the sentence. "Ghanashyam knows _____."
5. What was the prasad that Ghanashyam gave to the gods?



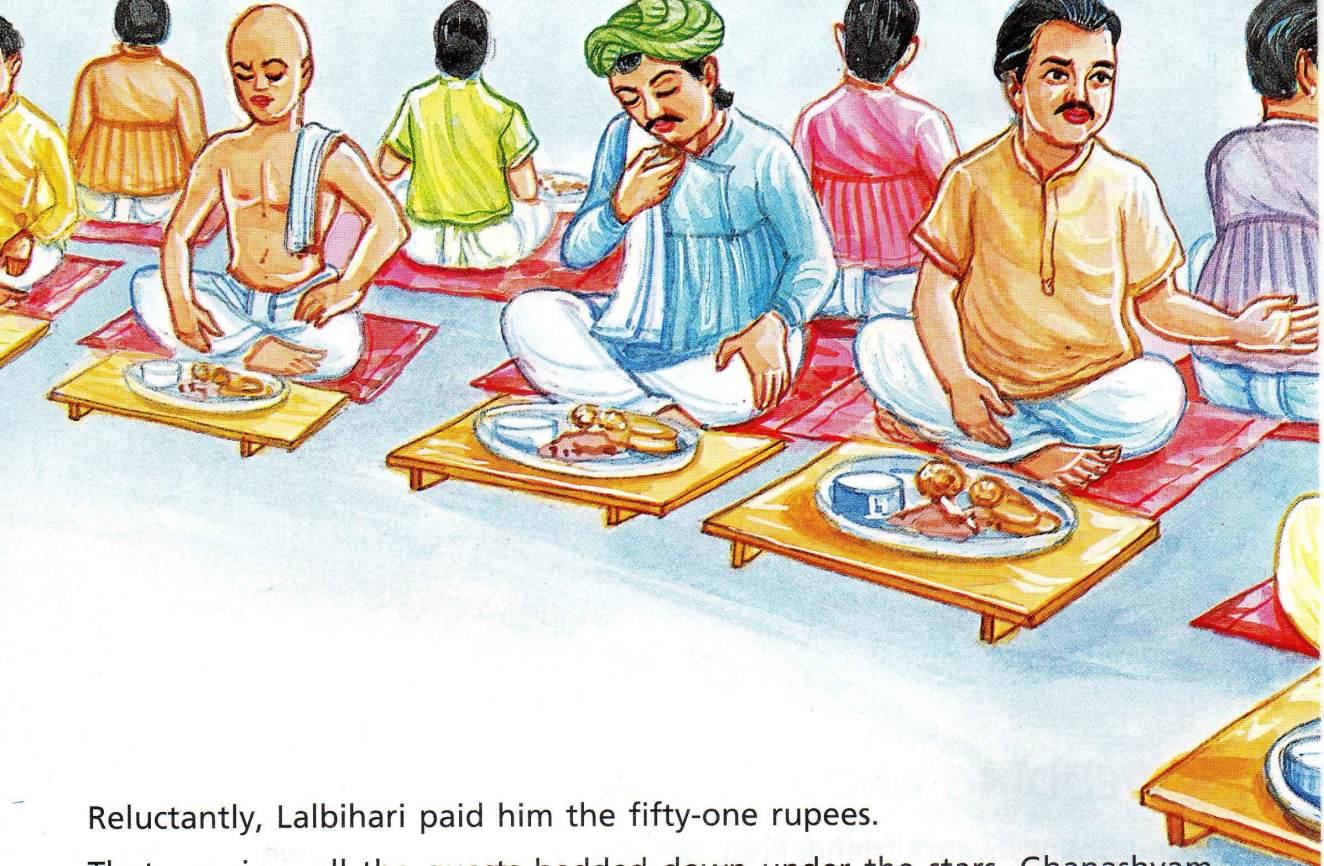


A WEDDING AND A FUNERAL

When Ghanashyam's friend, Prag, got married, all the family went to attend the wedding in the village of Nagipur. It was a grand wedding, attended by hundreds of family and friends.

The day after the wedding, everyone sat down under the big canopy for the wedding feast. There were mountains of golden, deep-fried puris, buckets full of delicious jageri, kilos of pure white ghee, and all kinds of hot spicy vegetables. Two of the guests were having an argument over who could eat the most. Unmath Tarvadi turned to his friend, Lalbihari. "I bet I can eat more than you!" he said. The Lalbihari replied, "I'll give you fifty-one rupees if you can eat that whole plate of puris, half a bucket of jageri, and two pots of ghee!"

Unmath accepted the bet, and called for the big plate of puris to be brought over, along with the ghee and jageri. He began to devour the puris, one by one, dipping them first in the ghee. After two or three, he would pick out a big chunk of jageri, and crunch on it. Everyone stopped eating, and stared. There must have been a hundred puris. How could one man eat so many? But slowly the pile began to get smaller and smaller, and finally, picking up the last puri, Unmath wiped up the remaining ghee, picked up the last chunk of jageri, and popped it all into his mouth! And then he called for a big dish of curd to wash it all down!



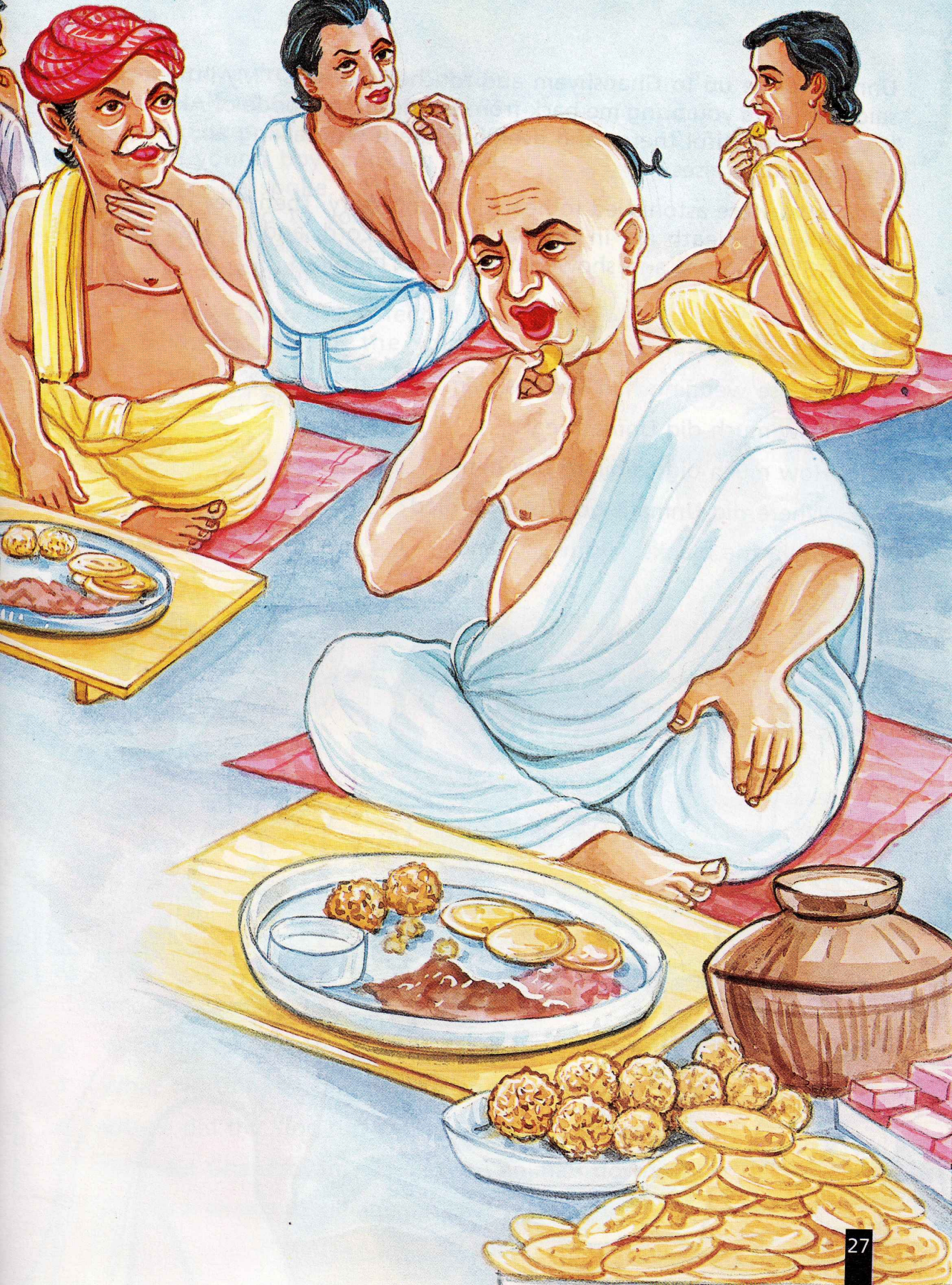
Reluctantly, Lalbihari paid him the fifty-one rupees.

That evening, all the guests bedded down under the stars. Ghanashyam was laying near Unmath. He turned to him. "Uncle," he said, " you shouldn't eat so much. Its not good for your health. You know, you can die from eating so much." Unmath laughed. " Well, my little lord, if I die, then you'll just have to bring me back to life again!" Then, turning over, he closed his eyes and went to sleep.

That night, all the food in Unmath's belly began to churn. He woke with a start, calling out in pain, and unable to breath. Many guests woke up and rushed to help him. But it was of no use. Unmath writhed, and choked, and gasped, and finally he breathed no more.

After the joy of the wedding, now all the guests had the sorrow of a funeral. In the morning they wrapped Unmath's body in white cloth, and carried it to the funeral pyre, chanting and calling out to God. All the women were crying and wailing.

Just as the funeral pyre was about to be lit, Ghanashyam remembered what Unmath had told him the night before. Raising his arms, he called to the people to stop. Then, stepping toward the body, he called on Unmath to get up! Everyone gasped as the body moved! Then, pulling the white cloth from his face, Unmath sat up, and then got down from the pyre!

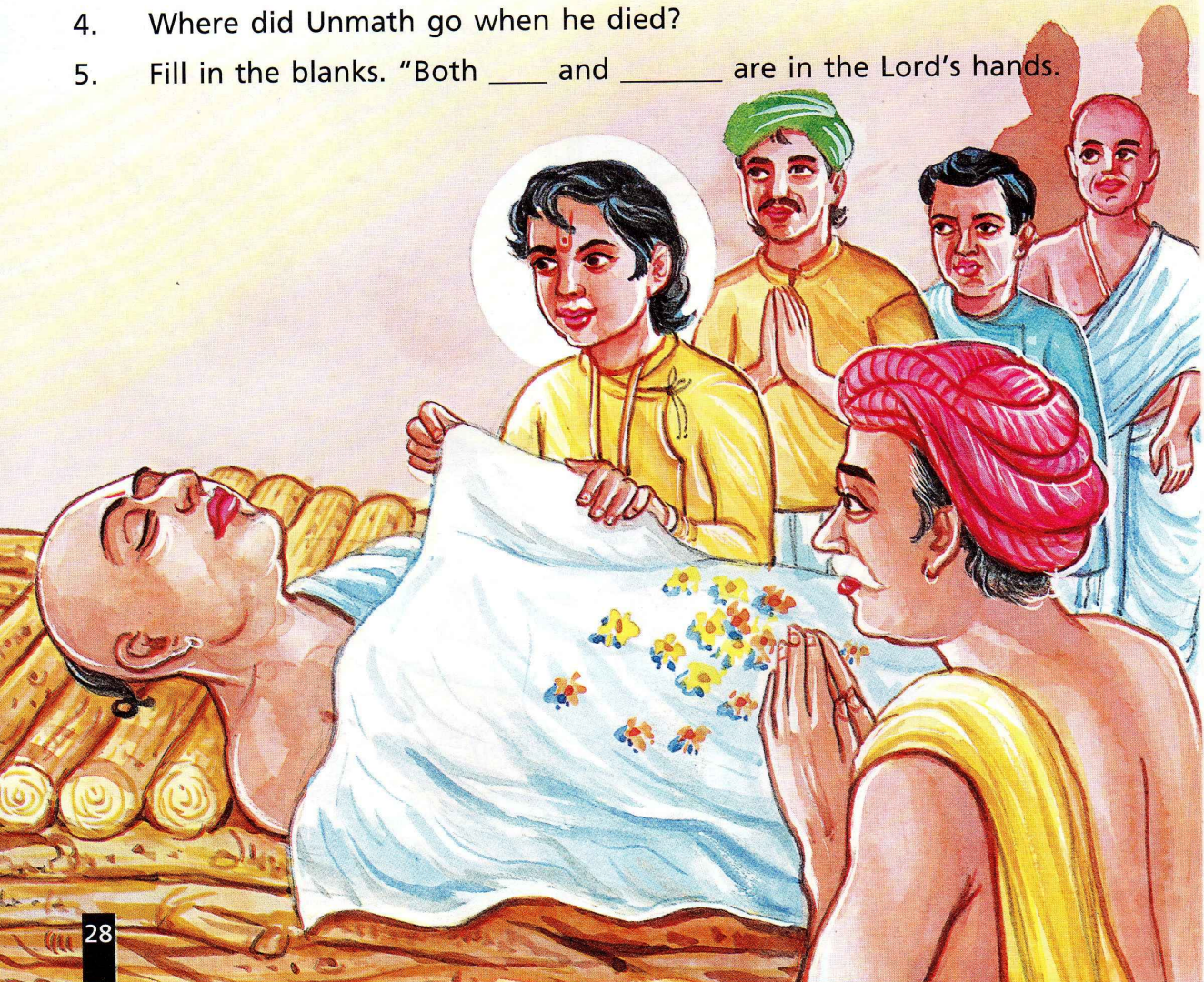


Unmath came up to Ghanashyam and touched his feet. "My little lord," he said, "why did you bring me back from the heavenly abode of Akshardham? It was so beautiful there. And everyone there was talking about you, and singing your praises."

The crowd were astonished to hear Unmath's story. Then they realized that both life and death are in the hands of the Lord, and they all gathered round Ghanashyam and showered him with blessings.

STUDY:

1. Whose wedding had Ghanashyam gone to attend?
2. How much did Unmath eat?
3. How much did Lalbihari pay him?
4. Where did Unmath go when he died?
5. Fill in the blanks. "Both ____ and _____ are in the Lord's hands."




THE MISCHIEVOUS FRIENDS

All boys are mischievous, and Ghanashyam and his friends were no different. Ghanashyam's best friend was Veniram. The two boys were inseparable, and were always playing together. Their two houses were very near to each other. Sometimes they would go to Veniram's house to play, and at other times to Ghanashyam's house. They were always getting up to mischief.

Like all small boys, they were always hungry. If Veniram's parents were out, then they would both go to their house and head for the kitchen. There, they would tuck into the curd, ghee, milk and jageri, and whatever food was lying around they would polish it off. If Ghanashyam's parents were out, then they would do the same at their house. If their parents questioned them about the missing food, both would pretend to be completely innocent.

One day, when they were eating food at Veniram's house, Veniram's mother came back early and caught them red-handed. She was very angry, and shouted at Ghanashyam.





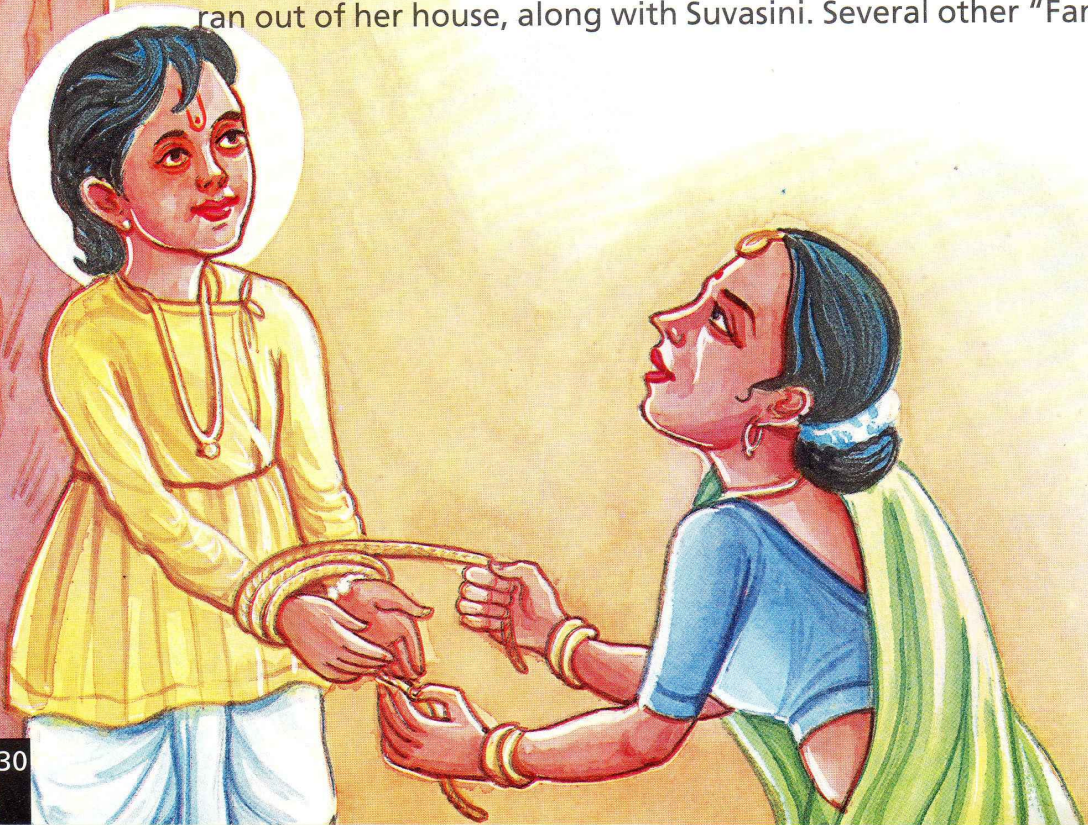
Then she marched him to his house to complain to his family. "Your Ghanashyam has been stealing food from my house." she said angrily. "You should keep him under control."

Suvasin began to argue with her. "Your Veniram often takes food from our house - but we don't complain!" she said. Bhaktimata refused to believe that Ghanashyam would take food like that. "What proof have you got?" she said. "I don't believe you. Next time it happens, you should catch him and tie him up in the kitchen itself, and call us. Then we might believe you!" Veniram's mother walked off angrily.

A few days later, Veniram's mother laid a trap for the boys. She pretended she was going out, but waited near the house. As soon as she left the house, sure enough the two boys came running and went into the kitchen. They were just beginning to tuck into a big bowl of ghee, when Veniram's mother appeared at the door, with a rope in her hand.

"Ah! Caught you!" she said, and grabbed Ghanashyam tightly by the arm. Veniram ran off, frightened.

Quickly she tied Ghanashyam's hands, calling out to Bhaktimata to come quickly. Hearing her calls, Bhaktimata ran out of her house, along with Suvasini. Several other "Fancy





neighbours also heard the calls, and came running to see what the commotion was about. All of them gathered at Veniram's house. Then Veniram's mother appeared at the door, holding onto Ghanashyam. "There! See, I told you your son was stealing my food." she said.

But just as they appeared in the doorway, Ghanashyam took on the form of his friend, Veniram. Bhaktimata, Suvasini and all the villagers looked at the woman as if she was mad. "What? Are you crazy?" asked Bhaktimata. That's not my Ghanashyam. It's your own Veniram!"

"Don't play games with me!" retorted Veniram's mother. "I know who I've caught. And I know the difference between my son and yours!"

"Then, why don't you look!" said Suvasini. Angrily, Veniram's mother glanced down at the boy in her grasp, and let out a cry when she saw her own son.

tying up your own son!" said Bhaktimata. "You should be ashamed!" And all the villagers burst out laughing, as Veniram's mother untied the boy and let him go.

STUDY:

1. Who was Ghanashyam's best friend?
2. Who is **your** best friend?
3. What kinds of food did the two friends take from the kitchen?
4. How did Veniram's mother trap Ghanashyam?
5. How did Ghanashyam escape?



