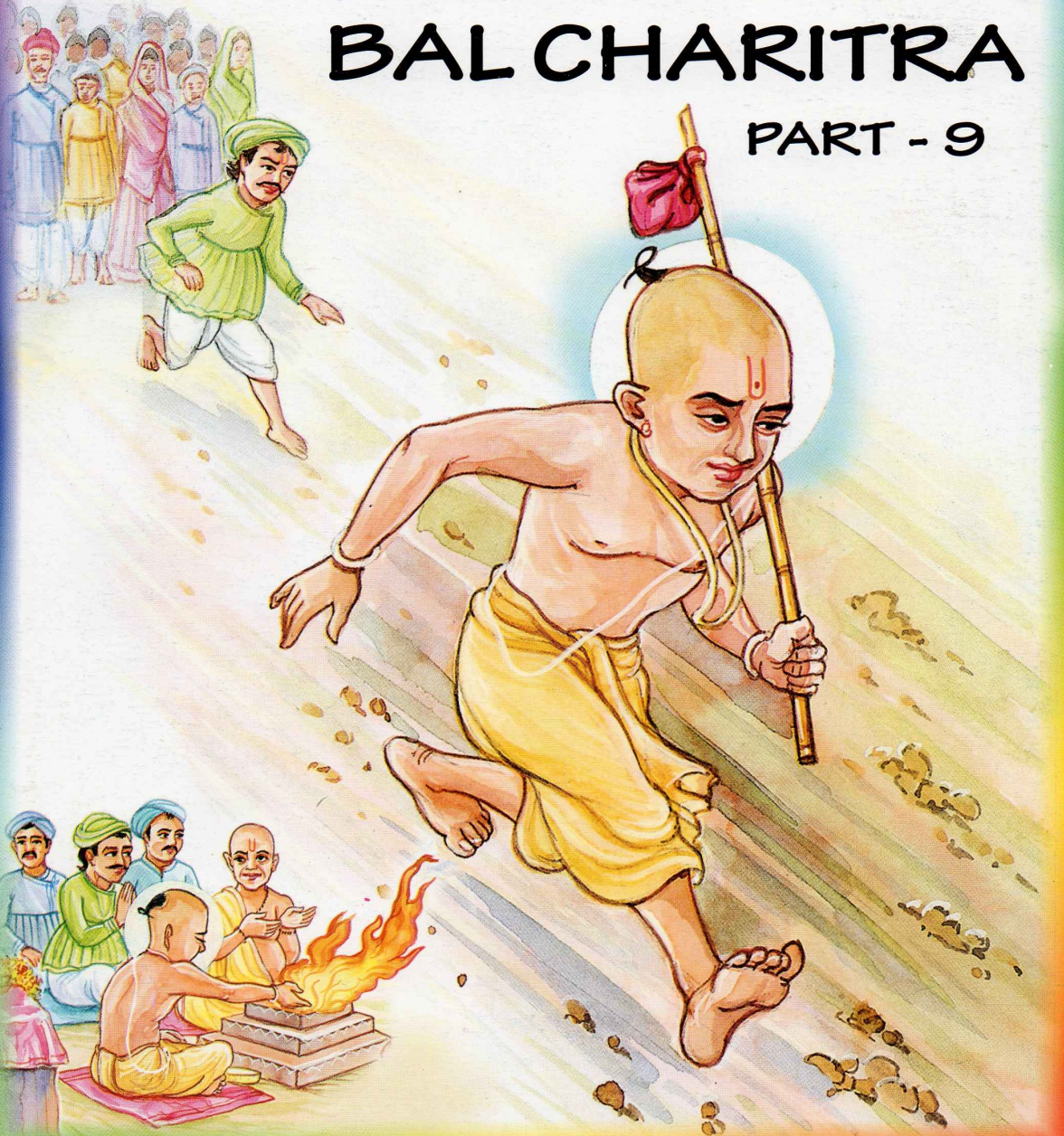


|| Shree Swaminarayano Vijaytetram ||

SHREE GHANASHYAM BAL CHARITRA

PART - 9



THE SUN AT NIGHT

It was monsoon, the season of rains. The sky was dark and full of clouds, and the sun had not been seen for days. Rampratapbhai became depressed, and took a vow that he would not take food until the sun appeared. But the dark sky grew darker, and then it began to rain. It rained for a whole day and a night, and Rampratap refused to take food. The next day it rained again. And then the next day also. For twelve whole days the rains poured from the skies and the sun was not to be seen. Rampratap continued with his fast, becoming weaker and weaker.

Ghanashyam was worried for his brother. He asked him, "Why don't you take some food? You will become weak and ill." Rampratap stubbornly repeated his vow to him. "I will not take food until I see the sun." he said.

Ghanashyam had an idea. That night he prayed to the sun-god Surya Narayan, asking to appear before his brother. Such was the power of Ghanashyam's prayer, that Surya Narayan immediately appeared before Ghanashyam and Rampratap, riding in his golden chariot drawn by seven white horses.



"Here, brother. See, I have brought the sun before you. Now you can eat." Said Ghanashyam. But Rampratap was not convinced. "That cannot be the sun-god. See, it is still night, and dark." he said.

Hearing this, Surya Narayan expanded his power, and suddenly began to glow with an amazing brightness. Rampratap shielded his eyes from the dazzling glare. For a few moments the night became like day, and in that brightness a thousand holy men came down from the heavens to pray at Ghanashyam's feet. Then Surya Narayan turned off his power, and darkness returned.

"Now do you believe?" said Surya Narayan. "Ghanashyam is our Lord, above all others. Why do you not believe in Him?"





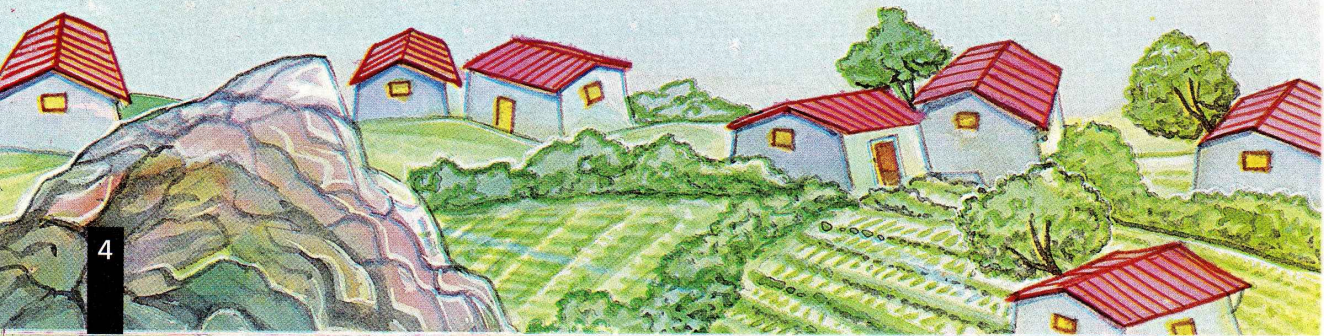
Rampratap hung his head in shame. The going to his brother, he hugged him tightly. "My brother, my lord," he said, "thankyou for granting my wish. Now I will break my fast."

Then Surya Narayan raised his hand in blessing over the two brothers, and turned his chariot toward the skies. As he sped off, over the village of Chappaiya, he released his power, glowing brightly. In the darkness, there was a trail of light speeding through the skies, turning night into day. The people of Chappaiya woke up from their sleep, and rushed to their windows to see the wondrous sight of Surya Narayan dashing through the skies.



STUDY:

1. Why did Rampratap go on a fast?
2. How many days did the rains continue?
3. In your own words, describe Surya Narayan's chariot.
4. How did Surya Narayan convince Rampratap that he really was the sun-god?
5. Fill in the blank. " As Surya Narayan sped off, the night became like _____."





THE GHOSTS AND THE MANGOES

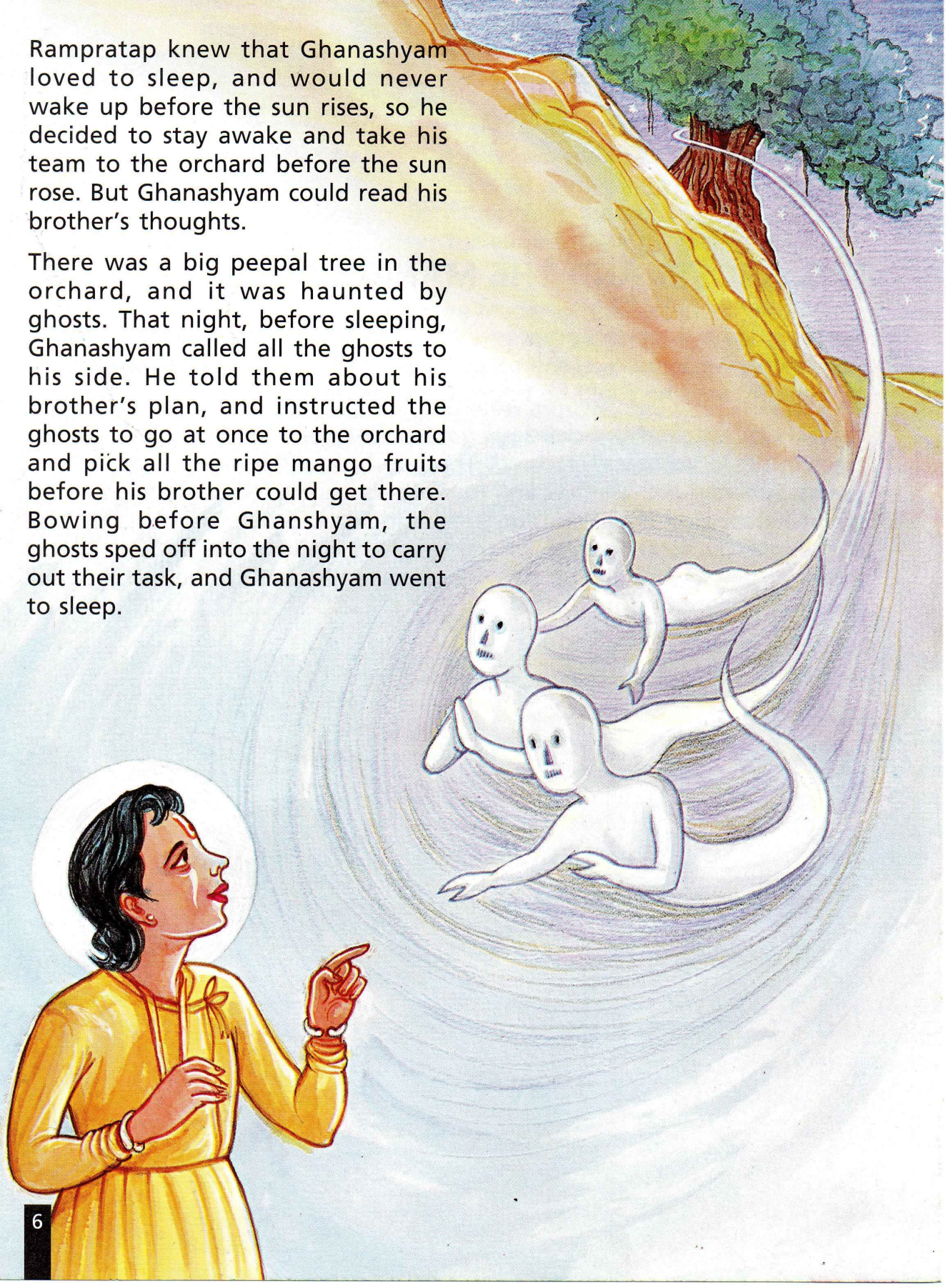
Brothers always try to compete with each other, and Ghanshyam and Rampratap were just like any other brothers. Each one was always trying to think of ways he could be better than the other.

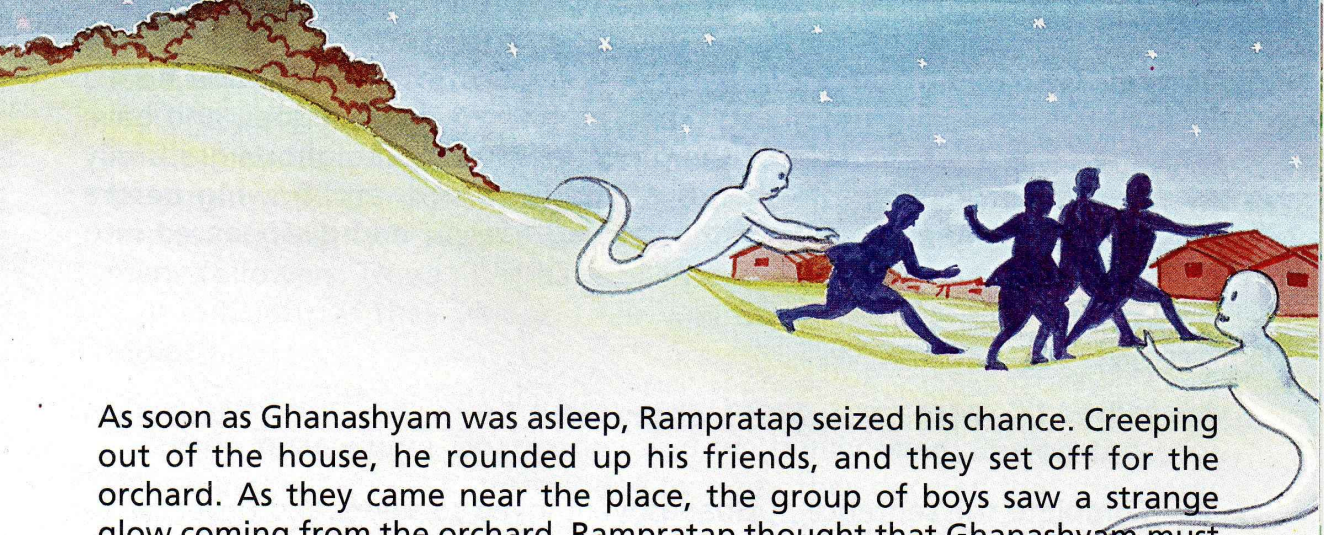
It was summer, and the delicious golden mangoes were ripening on the trees in uncle Vashram's orchard. The two brothers decided to form two teams. Sukhnandan, Madhav and four others were on Ghanashyam's team, while Rampratap had Veniram, Prag and some others on his side. The challenge was to see which of the brothers could wake up first in the morning. Whoever woke up first, would take his team to the orchard and get all the mangoes.



Rampratap knew that Ghanashyam loved to sleep, and would never wake up before the sun rises, so he decided to stay awake and take his team to the orchard before the sun rose. But Ghanashyam could read his brother's thoughts.

There was a big peepal tree in the orchard, and it was haunted by ghosts. That night, before sleeping, Ghanashyam called all the ghosts to his side. He told them about his brother's plan, and instructed the ghosts to go at once to the orchard and pick all the ripe mango fruits before his brother could get there. Bowing before Ghanashyam, the ghosts sped off into the night to carry out their task, and Ghanashyam went to sleep.





As soon as Ghanashyam was asleep, Rampratap seized his chance. Creeping out of the house, he rounded up his friends, and they set off for the orchard. As they came near the place, the group of boys saw a strange glow coming from the orchard. Rampratap thought that Ghanashyam must have played a trick on them, and got there before them to beat them to the mangoes. The boys all rushed toward the trees.

But there they got the shock of their lives when they saw the ghostly forms, plucking the mangoes from the trees and piling them on the ground. Disturbed in their task, the ghosts turned on the boys. With whoops and yells, they darted all around them, grabbing at their clothes and pulling their hair. The horrified boys ran for their lives, screaming in terror!

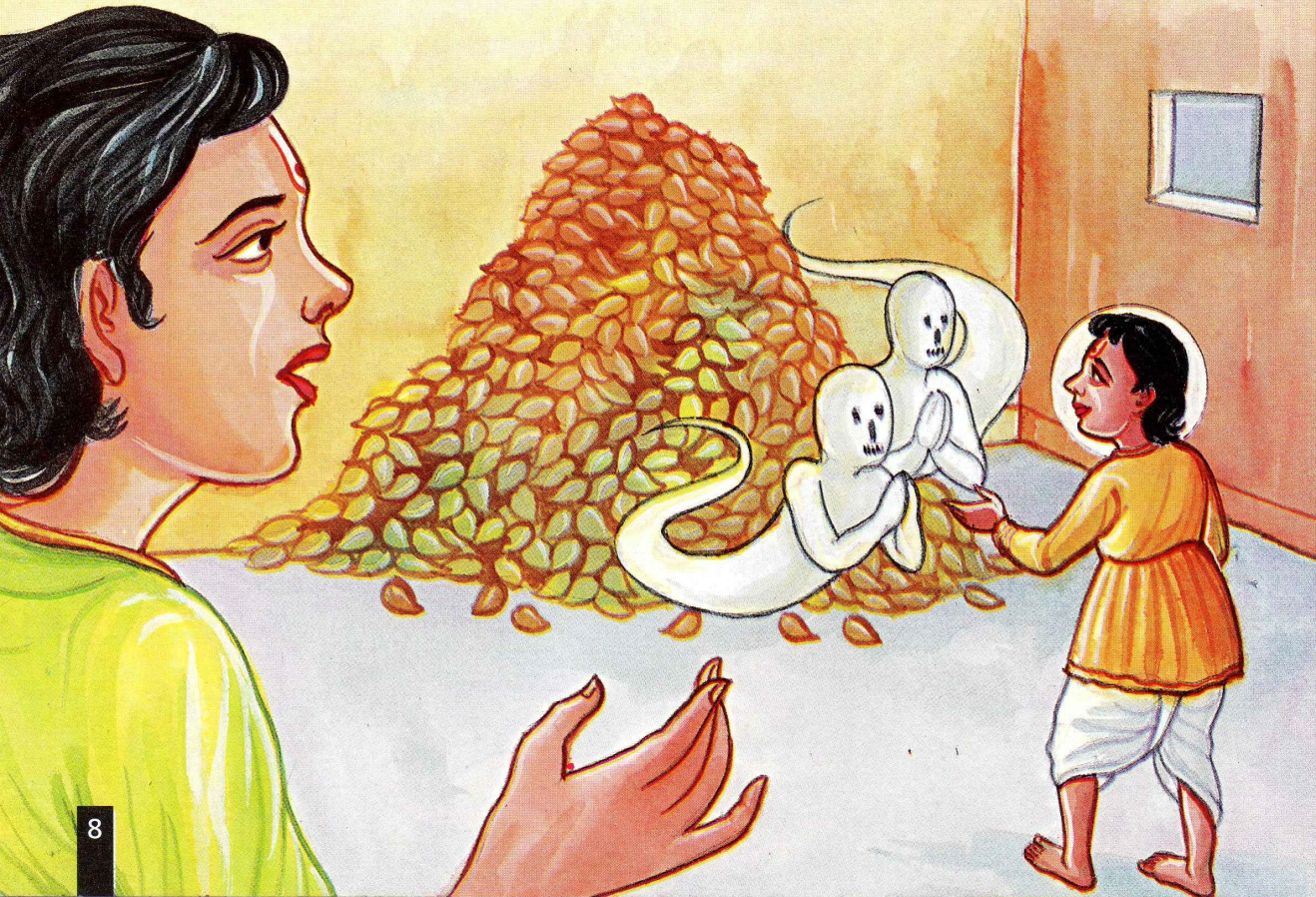
Reaching his home, Rampratap and his friends got another shock. The ghosts had reached there before them! There they all were, gathered on the verandah. And right in the middle of them all sat his little brother Ghanashyam. He was smiling and laughing, and there in front of him was a big pile of mangoes!



As they watched from a distance, Rampratap and his friends heard Ghanashyam thanking the ghosts. Then he blessed the mangoes, and gave ten of the ripe fruits to each of the ghosts as prasad. The ghosts gratefully accepted the fruits from the hands of the little lord, and bowing before him, flew off over the heads of the startled friends, and disappeared into the darkness.

STUDY:

1. Fill in the blank. "Brothers always like to _____ with each other."
2. Complete the sentence. " Ghanashyam loved to sleep, and never woke up before"
3. What kind of tree did the ghosts live in?
4. What is your favourite fruit?
5. What did Ghanashyam give to the ghosts as prasad?

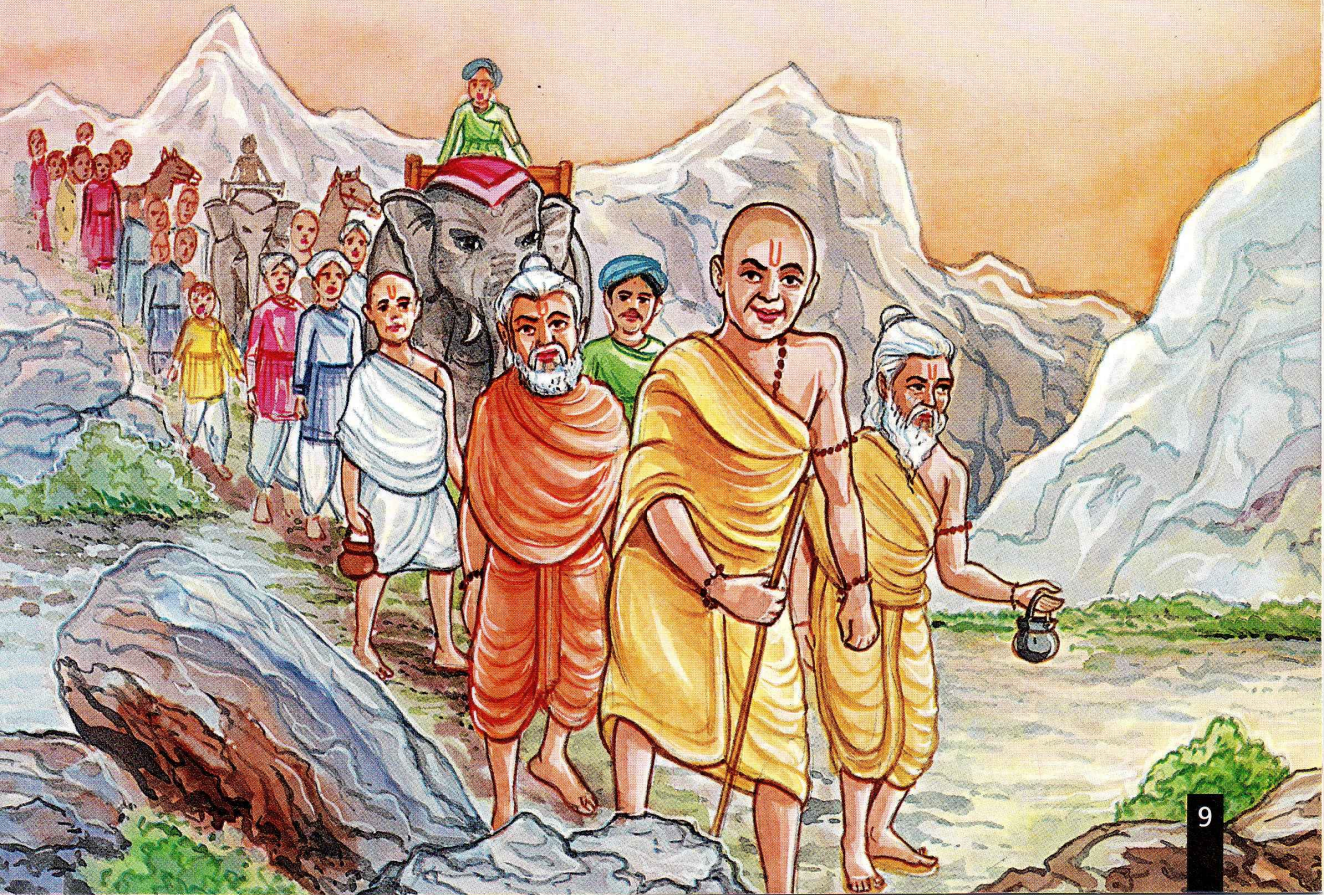


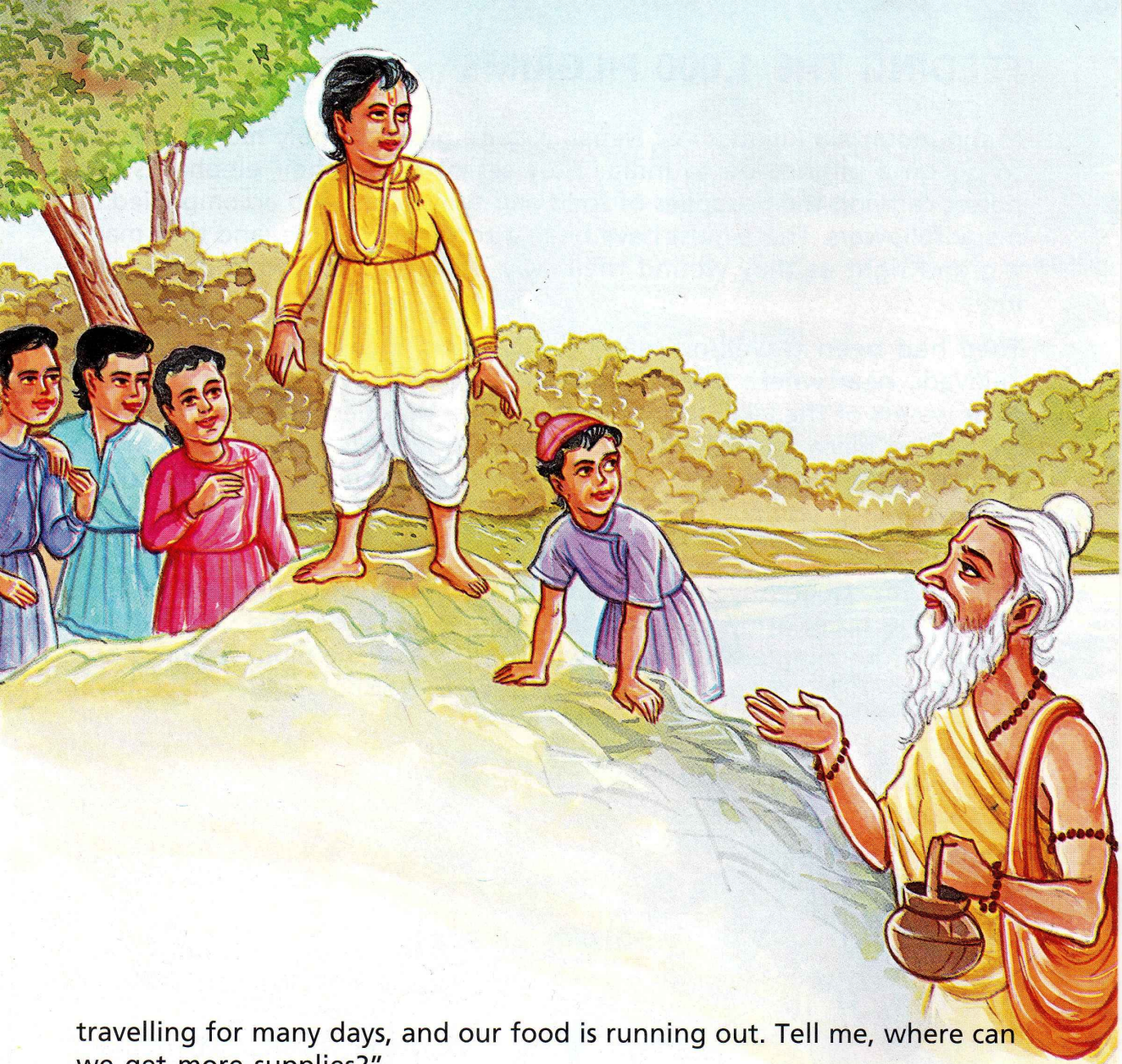
FEEDING THE 1,000 PILGRIMS

In the mountain kingdom of Nepal, a large group of holy monks decided to go on a pilgrimage to India. They set off, with their elephants and horses carrying their supplies of food and their tents, and accompanied by many followers. There must have been a thousand people, and they made a grand sight as they wound their way down the mountain paths, into India.

They had been travelling many days, when they came to the Khapa Talavadi, near where Dharmadev and his family lived. Seeing the cool, clear waters of the lake, surrounded by trees, they decided that this would be a good place to pitch their tents and camp for a few days. Soon the shores of the lake were buzzing with activity. Bundles were unpacked, tents were erected, and the elephants and horses were led to the lake to drink.

At this time, Ghanashyam and his friends came down to the lake to play. Seeing the great army of monks and people, they became very excited, and began to mingle with the crowd. Then one of the monks approached the group of boys. Looking at Ghanashyam, he spoke. "We have been





travelling for many days, and our food is running out. Tell me, where can we get more supplies?"

Without hesitating, Ghanashyam offered to take him home to meet his father, Dharmadev. "He surely will give you food for all." He said. So a group of the monks accompanied Ghanashyam and his friends, and set off for Dharmadev's house.

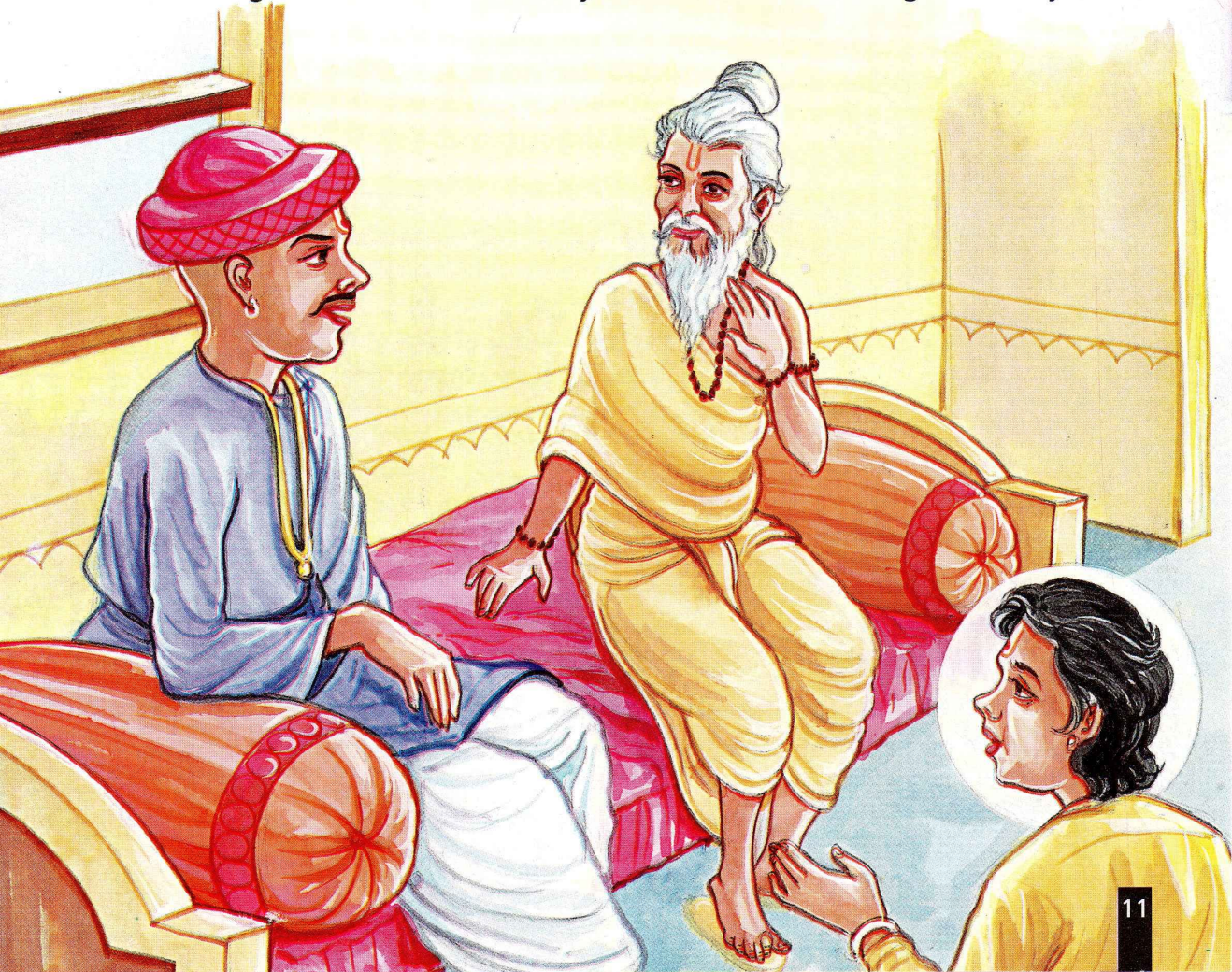
Dharmadev was surprised to see Ghanashyam with the monks approaching the house. Eagerly, Ghanashyam approached him. "Father, these holy men have come on pilgrimage all the way from Nepal, along with hundreds of their followers. They are very hungry. We must feed

them!" Dharmadev was shocked. "And what am I supposed to feed them with?" he said, " There is not enough food in the house for so many people."

But Ghanashyam pleaded with him, and finally he said "Alright. Whatever food is in the house, they can have." Then, calling Bhaktimata and Suvasinibhabhi, he asked them to bring whatever food supplies were there.

The two women brought out baskets of vegetables, and containers of rice and wheat, and pots of ghee and jaggari, and laid them before the monks. "This is not enough." said Ghanashyam. "They will need more." Bhaktimata remonstrated. "There is no more. The kitchen shelves are empty." But Ghanashyam insisted. "Go back inside. You will find more." he said.

The two women returned to the kitchen, and were astonished to see that all the shelves were still piled with food. Excitedly, they carried it all out to the waiting monks. Then Ghanshyam sent them back again. Many times



this happened, and each time they went back to the kitchen, the shelves were always full of food.

Soon there was a great mountain of food before the monks. At last there was enough to feed the one thousand pilgrims. There was so much food that they had to call for more people to help them carry it back to the camp. "See!" said Ghanashyam, "I knew there was enough for all. Whatever his people need, God will provide."

Smiling happily, the monks recognized the God in Ghanashyam, and one by one touched his feet in reverence.



STUDY:

1. Which country did the monks come from?
2. Where did the pilgrims make their camp?
3. Do you remember how Khapa Talavadi got its name?
4. How did Ghanshyam feed the one thousand pilgrims?
5. Fill in the blank. "Whatever his people need, God will _____."





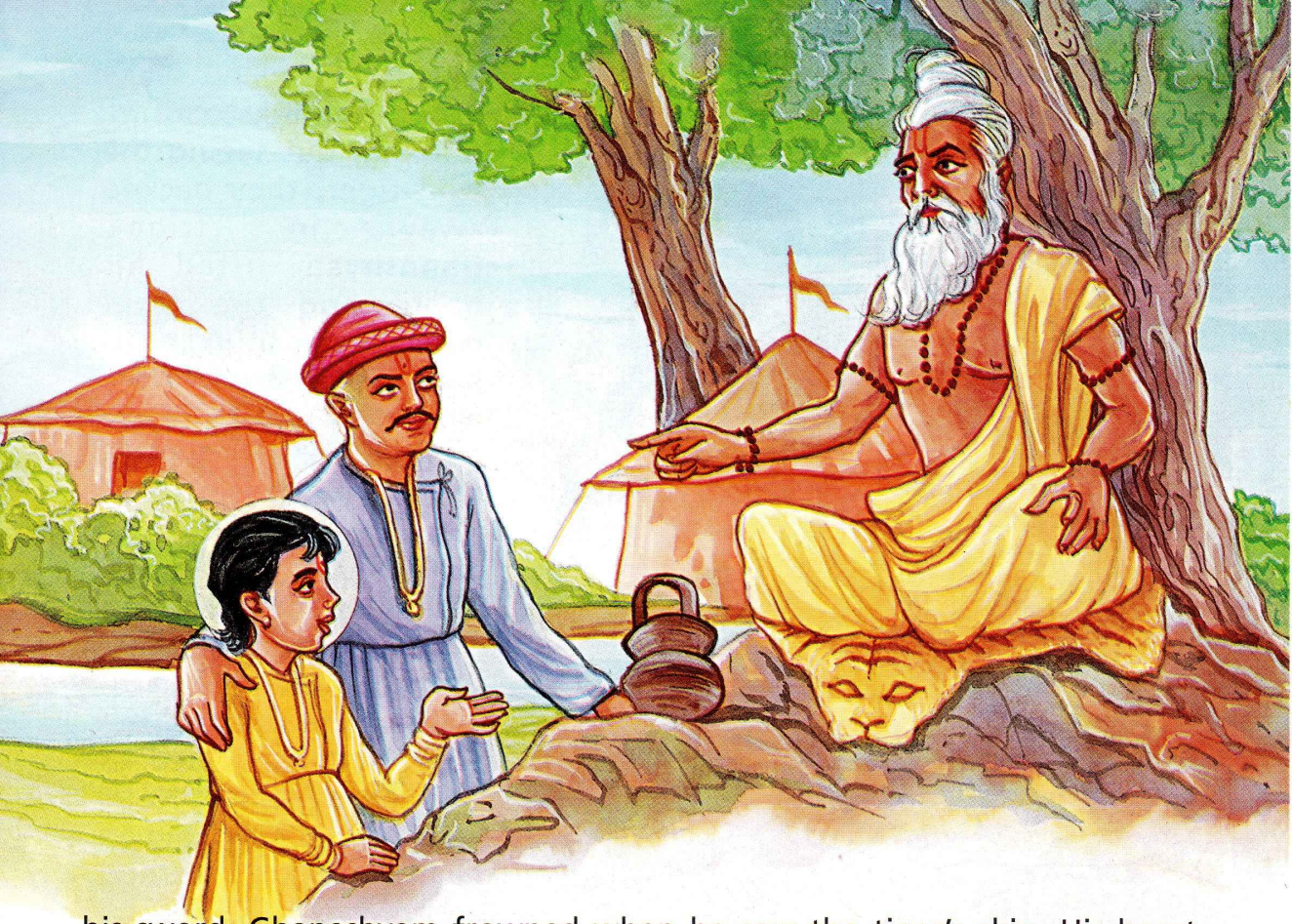
THE MONK AND THE TIGER

There were many holy monks, along with their followers, on a pilgrimage in India. After travelling many days, they camped with their elephants and horses near the Khapa Talavadi. Tired and hungry, they had asked Ghanashyam for food, and he performed a great miracle by bringing out food for all the thousand people from his mother's kitchen.

The grateful monks touched Ghanashyam's feet in gratitude, and returned back to their camp with the food, and set about cooking it with their followers.

Later, Ghanashyam and his father decided to visit the monk's camp, to make sure everyone had enough to eat. As they walked through the camp, everyone was in a happy mood, calling out their thanks to Ghanashyam, and praising him.

In one corner of the camp they came upon a monk sitting by himself. Dressed only in a loin-cloth, he was sitting on a tiger skin, chopping up chillies with



his sword. Ghanashyam frowned when he saw the tiger's skin. His heart filled with sorrow when he thought of how the beautiful animal had been killed. Pointing to the skin, he asked the monk, "Will you let me have that?"

The monk became indignant and angry. "Who do you think you are?" he asked. "This is my tiger skin, and it's very valuable!" Turning to Dharmadev, he said proudly, "You should teach your child to have respect for a holy man!"

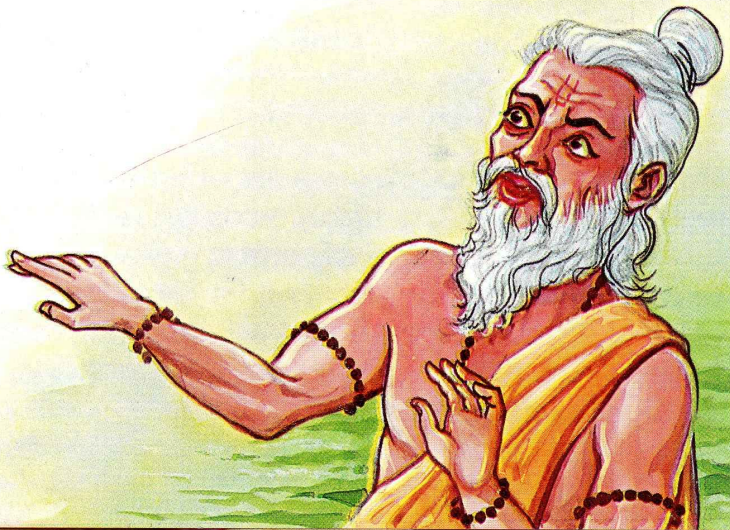
Dharmadev replied, "Let the boy have it. We will pay you for it. How much do you want?" The wily monk thought for a moment, then unable to resist the offer of money he said abruptly "Three hundred rupees!"

Three hundred rupees was a lot of money, and Ghanashyam and his father were shocked by the old monk's pride and greed. A holy man's mind is supposed to be above pride and the greed for money. Ghanashyam decided to teach him a lesson. He made a small gesture toward the tiger skin, and suddenly it swelled with life! The old monk fell off its back, and the tiger turned to face him, snarling ferociously. The old monk cringed in terror, as the tiger roared at him.



Hearing the sound, many other monks came running, but seeing the wild tiger, they backed away in fright. Ghanashyam lifted his hand, and the tiger became calm, sitting on its haunches in front of the old monk. Turning to the frightened monks, Ghanashyam spoke. "Have no fear. The tiger will not harm you. His only enemy is that old man there." he said, pointing to the old monk, still cowering in front of the tiger. The tiger roared, as if in agreement. "He is angry at him for sitting on him, and being so proud and greedy."

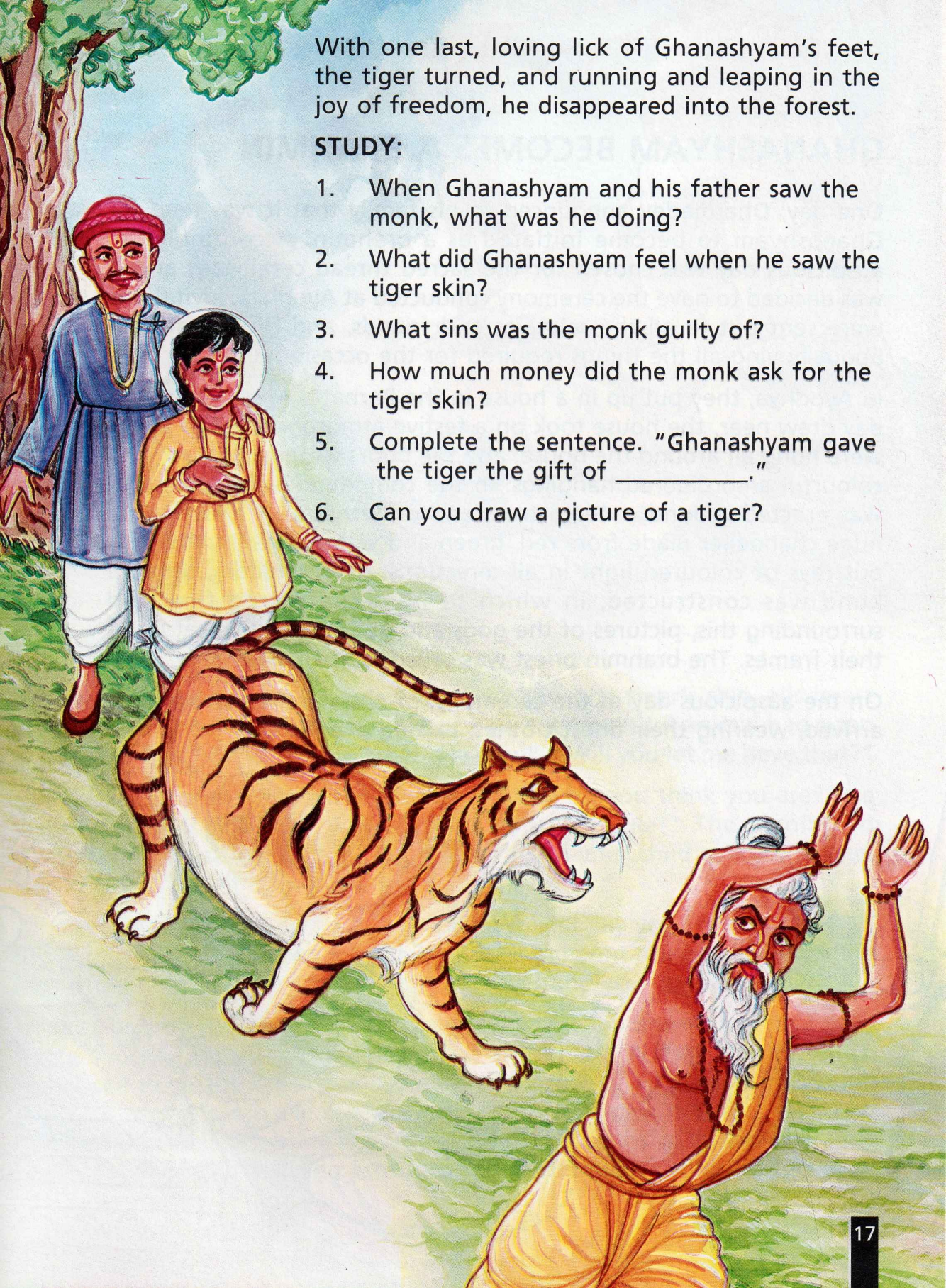
Whimpering in fear and shame, the old monk begged Ghanashyam's forgiveness. Ghanashyam gestured to the tiger. Purring like a cat, the huge creature meekly came to Ghanashyam, rubbing himself against the boy, and licking his hand with his big tongue. Ghanashyam stroked the big cat's head. "Now I give you the gift of freedom." he said. "Go, and enjoy your life again."



With one last, loving lick of Ghanashyam's feet, the tiger turned, and running and leaping in the joy of freedom, he disappeared into the forest.

STUDY:

1. When Ghanashyam and his father saw the monk, what was he doing?
2. What did Ghanashyam feel when he saw the tiger skin?
3. What sins was the monk guilty of?
4. How much money did the monk ask for the tiger skin?
5. Complete the sentence. "Ghanashyam gave the tiger the gift of _____."
6. Can you draw a picture of a tiger?

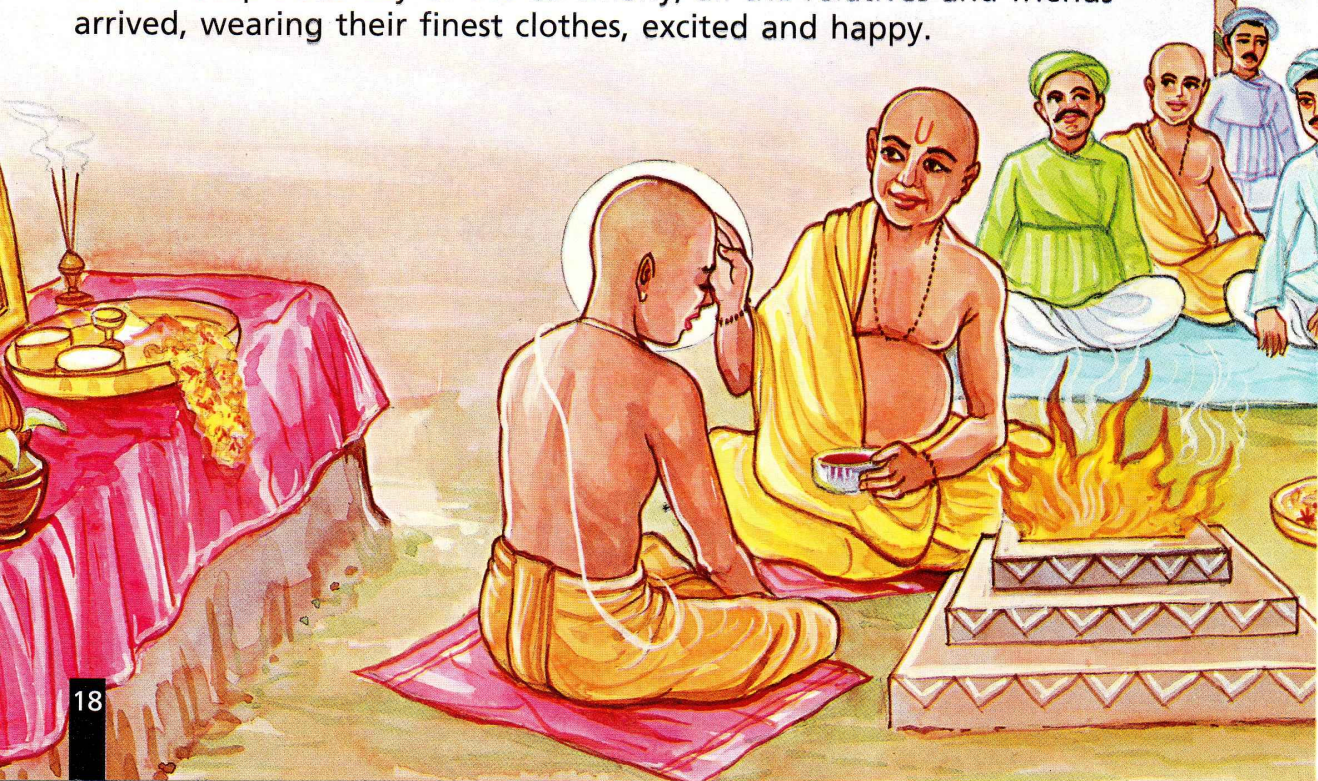


GHANASHYAM BECOMES A BRAHMIN

One day, Dharmadev announced to his family that it was time for Ghanashyam to become initiated as a brahmin. Accordingly, an auspicious day was chosen for the sacred thread ceremony, and it was decided to have the ceremony conducted at Ayodhya. Invitations were sent out to all the relatives and friends, and Dharmadev set about buying all the things required for the occasion.

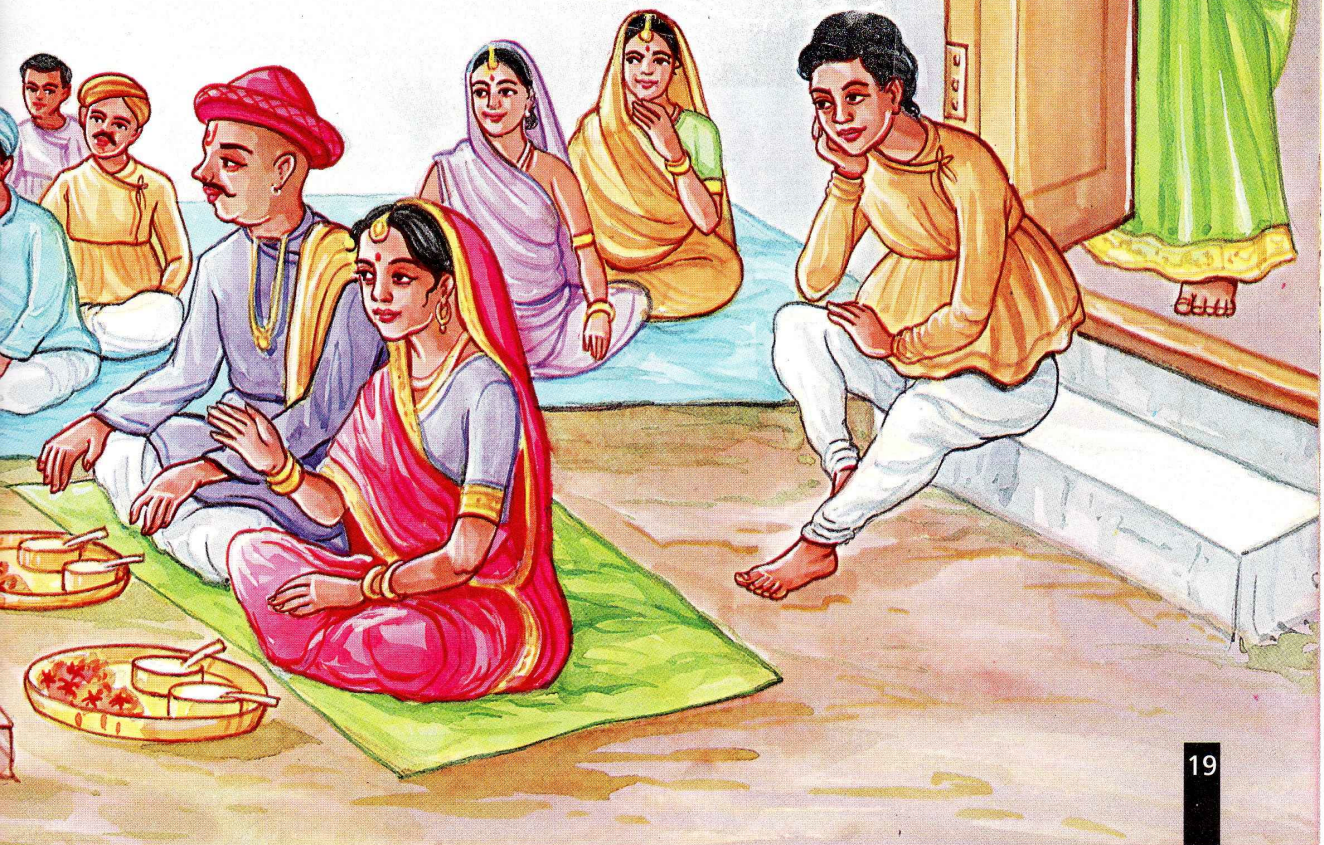
In Ayodhya, they put up in a house in the Barhatta area, and as the day drew near, the house took on a festive atmosphere. Glass lamps were hung all around the house, and the doors were festooned with colourful embroidered hangings. In the compound, a huge canopy was erected around a neem tree, and underneath it was hung a huge chandelier made from red, green and yellow glass, which sent out rays of coloured light in all directions. In the middle, an agni kund was constructed, in which to light the sacred fire, and surrounding this, pictures of the gods and goddesses were set up in their frames. The brahmin priest was called, and all was ready.

On the auspicious day of the ceremony, all the relatives and friends arrived, wearing their finest clothes, excited and happy.



Before the ceremony could begin, under instructions from the priest, Ghanashyam's family ceremoniously installed a statue of lord Ganapati in the home. Then it was time for Ghanashyam's ritual bath, and to shave his head. So purified, Ghanashyam was now ready for the ceremony, and he was led to the agni kund.

Under the canopy, the agni kund was lit, and the priest began his sacred chants. At the same time, different types of food were offered into the fire, such as rice, til seeds, ghee and Khakhra wafers, and seven kinds of wood were fed onto the sacred fire. All the gods and goddesses were watching the ceremony from their heavenly abode, showering the gathering with blessings in the form of flower petals that floated down from their hands. The air was rich with the smell of sandalwood and flower blossoms.

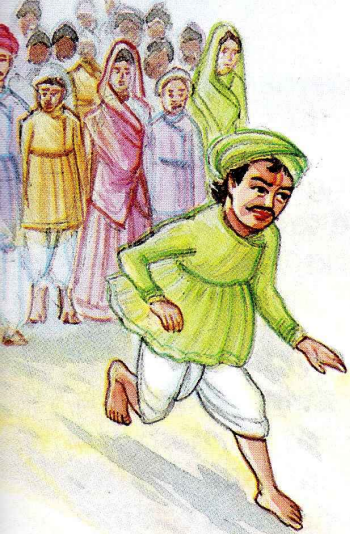


There came a point in the ceremony where Ghanashyam was symbolically dressed as a Brahmachari, a person who has given up his family and all worldly pleasures. Dressed as such, Ghanashyam got the feeling that this was what he had been born for on this earth. Suddenly, he stood up, and turning toward the North, he ran out of the gathering, leaving all behind him!

The people were stunned. Then Vashram stood up and began to chase after Ghanashyam to bring him back. But Ghanashyam was too fast for him, and soon, out of breath, Vashram gave up the chase.

Back in the crowd, Ghanashyam's parents were worried. How would they live without their beloved son? Far away,



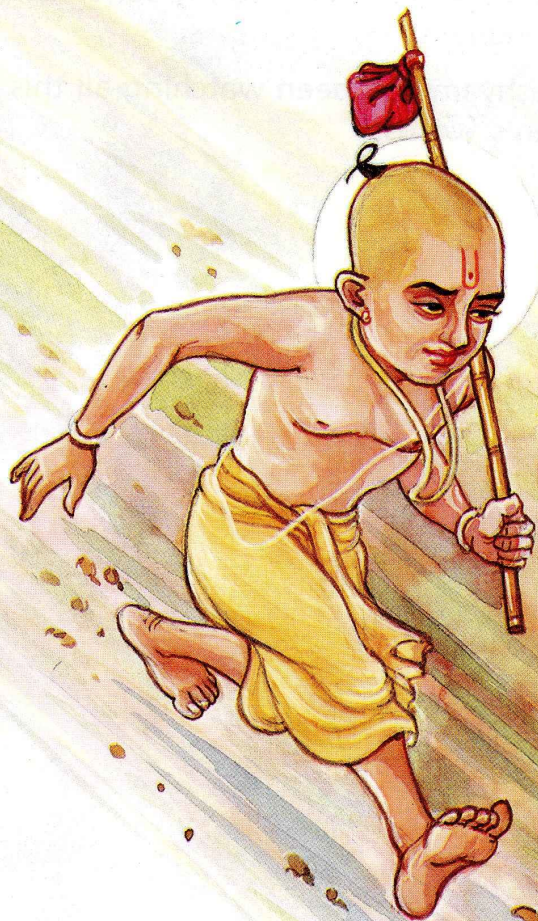


Ghanashyam caught their thoughts. He slowed down, and stopped running. He was filled with concern for his aged parents, and didn't want to cause them any pain. With a heavy heart, he turned and headed back to the gathering, to continue the ceremony.

STUDY:

1. What is the agni kund?
2. How many kinds of wood were burnt on the fire?
3. Before the ceremony, whose statue was installed in the house?
4. What is a brahmachari?
5. Complete the sentence.

"Ghanshyam came back because of his concern for his _____."



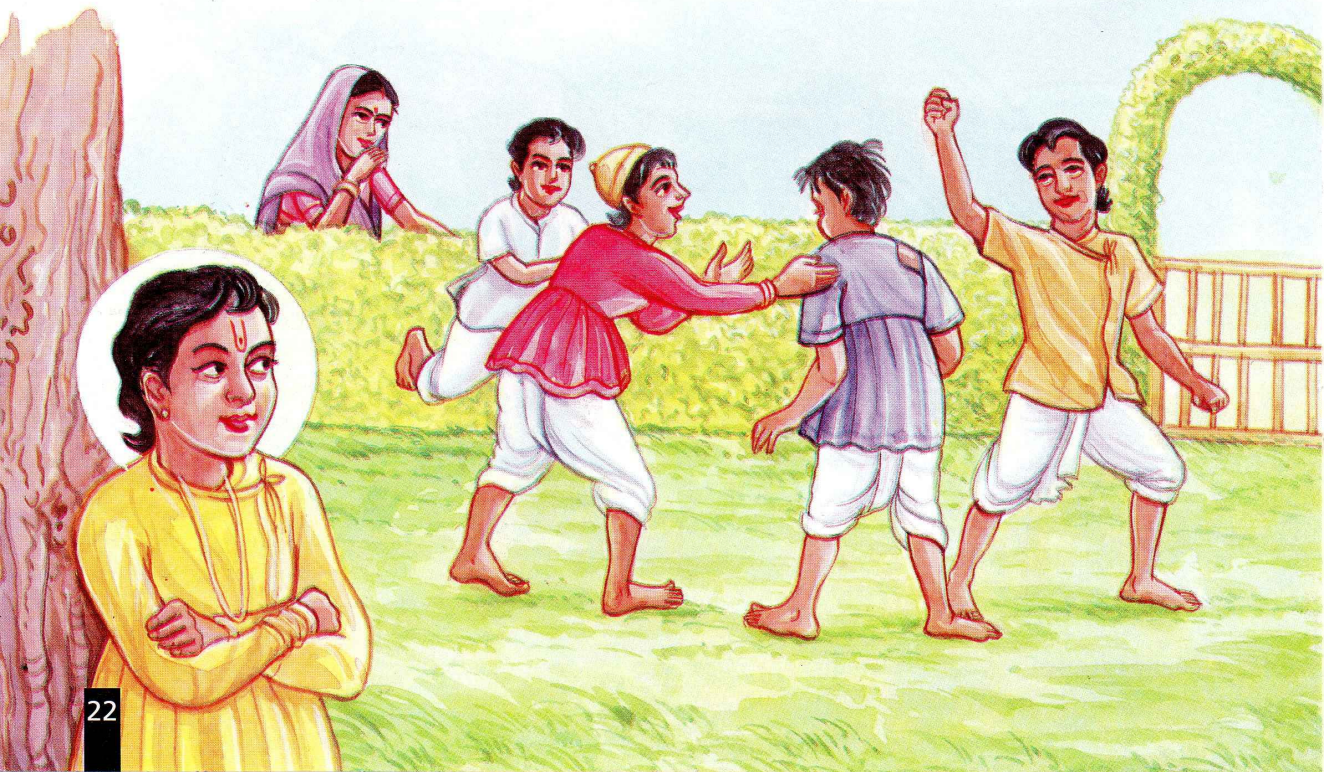
GHANASHYAM AND THE MAD BOY

In Ghanashyam's village of Chappaiya, there lived a young mad boy who lived with his mother. He was a happy soul, but because he took no interest in learning, and could not do even the simplest of tasks, many of the children of the village used to tease him.

One day Ghanashyam was playing near the well in his garden, with a group of his friends. At that time, the mad boy was passing by with his mother. Hearing the happy sound of laughter coming from Ghanashyam and his friends, he ran into the garden to join in the fun. Ghanashyam's friends immediately surrounded him and began to tease him and call him names. The innocent boy didn't realize what was happening, and thought it was all part of a game. But his mother heard the cruel taunts of the boys and became angry. She stormed into the garden and began chasing the boys away from her son.

"Why are you so cruel to my son?" she asked. "Can't you see he is pure and innocent?"

Ghanashyam had been watching all this time. He realized the truth of the woman's words.



Looking into the boy's soul, he could see that he had been a great Yogi in his previous incarnation. He came and stood before the boy, and then with his divine powers he assumed a godly form.

The boy looked in wonder at Ghanashyam. He saw the four-armed God, standing before him, smiling benignly at him. He let out a gasp, and then fell to his knees before Ghanashyam, touching his feet. Ghanashyam leaned forward and placed his hand on the boy's head. "You are a great soul." He said. "You have suffered long in this life. Now you shall suffer no more." And so saying, he resumed his earthly form again.

Instantly the madness flew from the boy, and his mind became clear and sharp. With tears in his eyes, the boy gazed lovingly at the little lord, and praised him. Gently, Ghanashyam raised him to his feet, and returned the boy to his mother.





"Take care of him, Ma." he said, "Your son is a great soul, and when it is time for him to leave this earth, his soul will go straight to Akshardham." Tears of happiness welled up in her eyes, and she bent to touch Ghanashyam's feet in gratitude.

STUDY:

1. How were Ghanashyam's friends cruel to the boy?
2. Fill in the blank. "The boy was a great Yogi in his _____ life."
3. How many arms did the godly form of Ghanashyam have?
4. How did Ghanashyam cure the boy?
5. Where did Ghanashyam say the boy's soul would go when he leaves this earth?

THE WORDLY SADHU

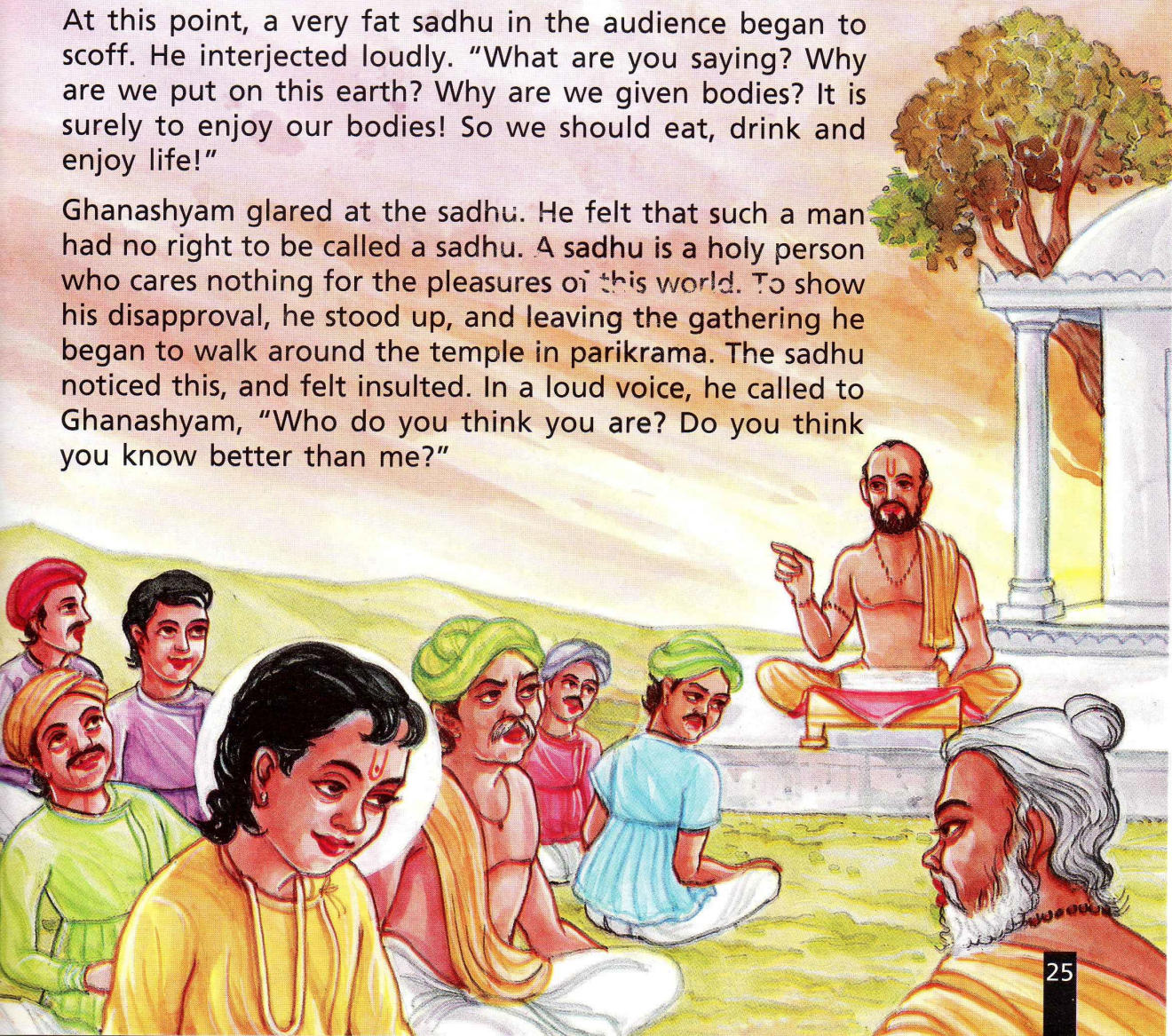
Regular fasting or going without food for a while, is good for us. It helps the body and mind clean out all kinds of impurities, and brings us nearer to God. Ghanashyam would always observe the fast days, and on one such day he had gone to the temple of Hanuman in Ayodhya.

There at the temple, in front of the statue of Hanumanji, a sadhu called Mohandas was reciting the Ramayana. Sitting before him was a group of sadhus, listening intently. Ghanashyam joined the group and sat down.

At one point, Mohandas was extolling the virtues of fasting. He was explaining that you may do a hundred, or even a thousand Yagnas, but those fires of purification will never equal the purification of fasting.

At this point, a very fat sadhu in the audience began to scoff. He interjected loudly. "What are you saying? Why are we put on this earth? Why are we given bodies? It is surely to enjoy our bodies! So we should eat, drink and enjoy life!"

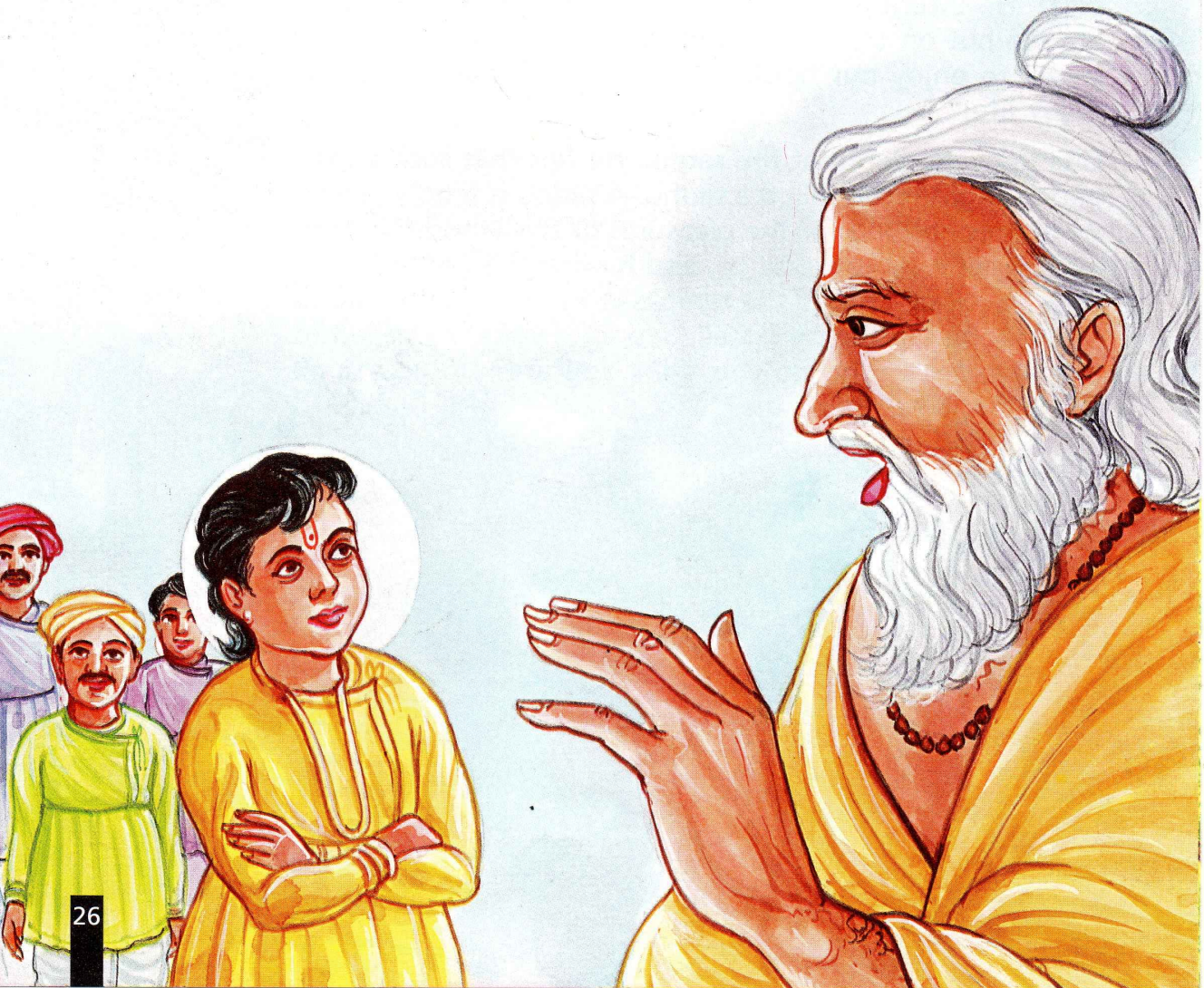
Ghanashyam glared at the sadhu. He felt that such a man had no right to be called a sadhu. A sadhu is a holy person who cares nothing for the pleasures of this world. To show his disapproval, he stood up, and leaving the gathering he began to walk around the temple in parikrama. The sadhu noticed this, and felt insulted. In a loud voice, he called to Ghanashyam, "Who do you think you are? Do you think you know better than me?"



Ghanashyam turned and stared at the sadhu with burning eyes. Immediately the sadhu was transported to Yampuri, the place where wicked people go when they die. He found himself surrounded by spirits of death, whooping and screaming around him, beating him and pulling him. "Who do you think you are?" they yelled at him. "Don't you know, you have insulted the lord God Himself? You have no right to call yourself a sadhu!"

The sadhu was stunned. Immediately he realised his mistake, and while the spirits continued to beat him, he pleaded for mercy and forgiveness.

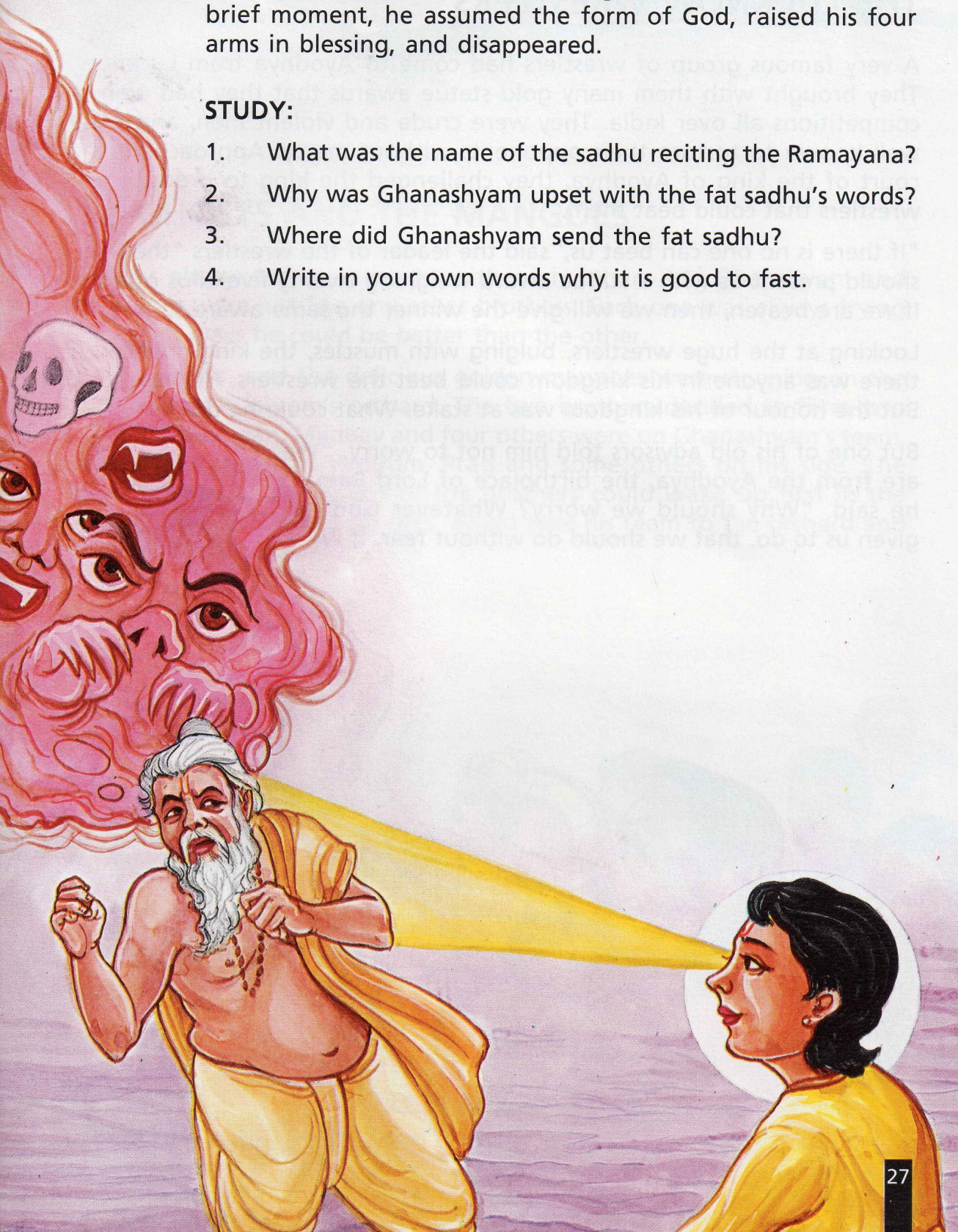
Immediately Ghanashyam called him back from Yampuri, and the weeping sadhu found himself at the temple, cringing on the floor in front of the young man. Touching his feet, he begged forgiveness from Ghanashyam. "Forgive me Lord" he said, "From this day forward, I will never speak against fasting. I will practice and preach it wherever I go!"



Smiling benignly, Ghanashyam forgave the sadhu.. Then for a brief moment, he assumed the form of God, raised his four arms in blessing, and disappeared.

STUDY:

1. What was the name of the sadhu reciting the Ramayana?
2. Why was Ghanashyam upset with the fat sadhu's words?
3. Where did Ghanashyam send the fat sadhu?
4. Write in your own words why it is good to fast.



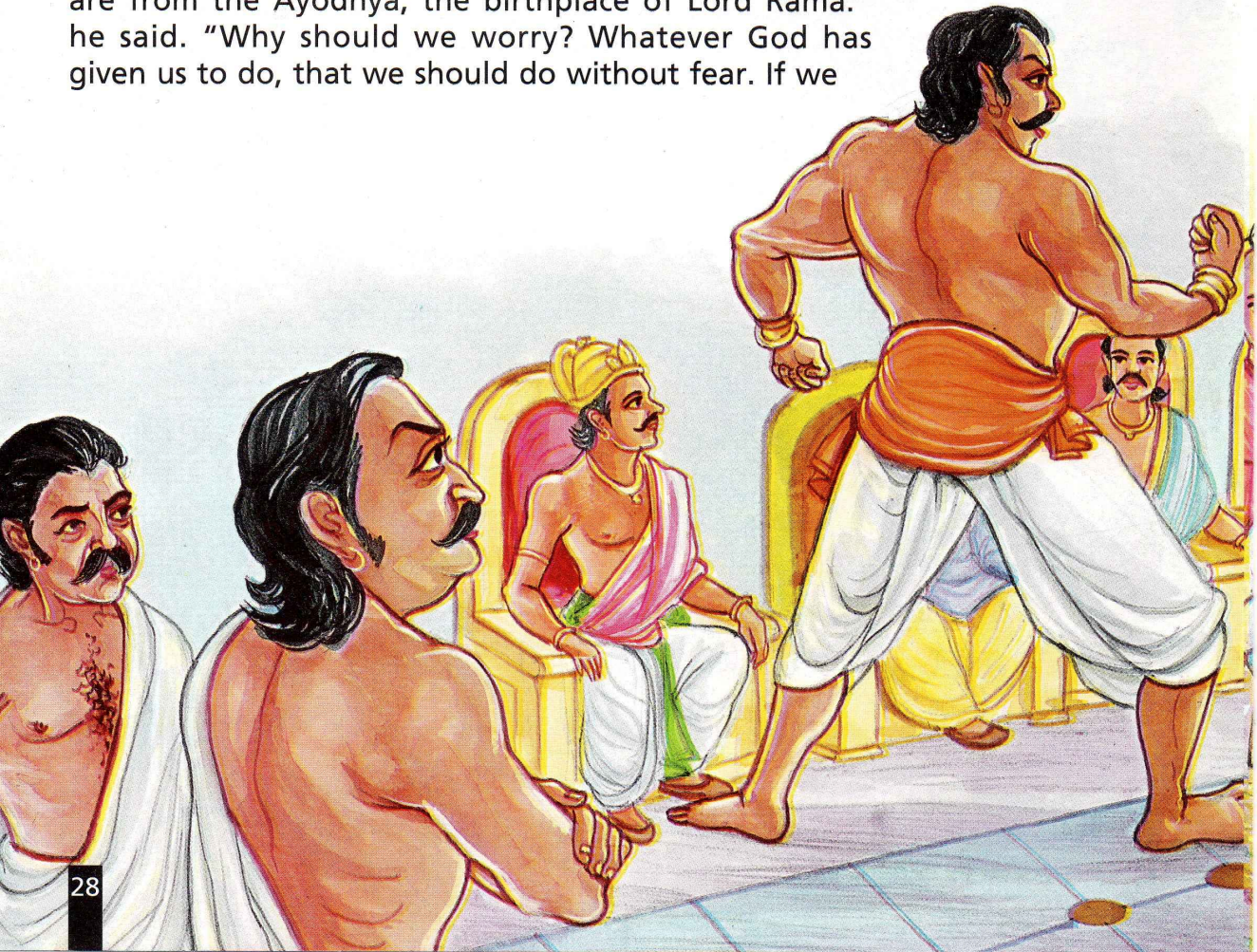
THE LUCKNOW WRESTLERS

A very famous group of wrestlers had come to Ayodhya from Lucknow. They brought with them many gold statue awards that they had won in competitions all over India. They were crude and violent men, and were well known to torture their opponents without mercy. Approaching the court of the king of Ayodhya, they challenged the king to produce any wrestlers that could beat them.

"If there is no one can beat us,' said the leader of the wrestlers "then you should present us with a statue award weighing twenty-five kilos of gold. If we are beaten, then we will give the winner the same award."

Looking at the huge wrestlers, bulging with muscles, the king doubted if there was anyone in his kingdom could beat the wrestlers. He hesitated. But the honour of his kingdom was at stake. What could he do?

But one of his old advisors told him not to worry. "We are from the Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama." he said. "Why should we worry? Whatever God has given us to do, that we should do without fear. If we

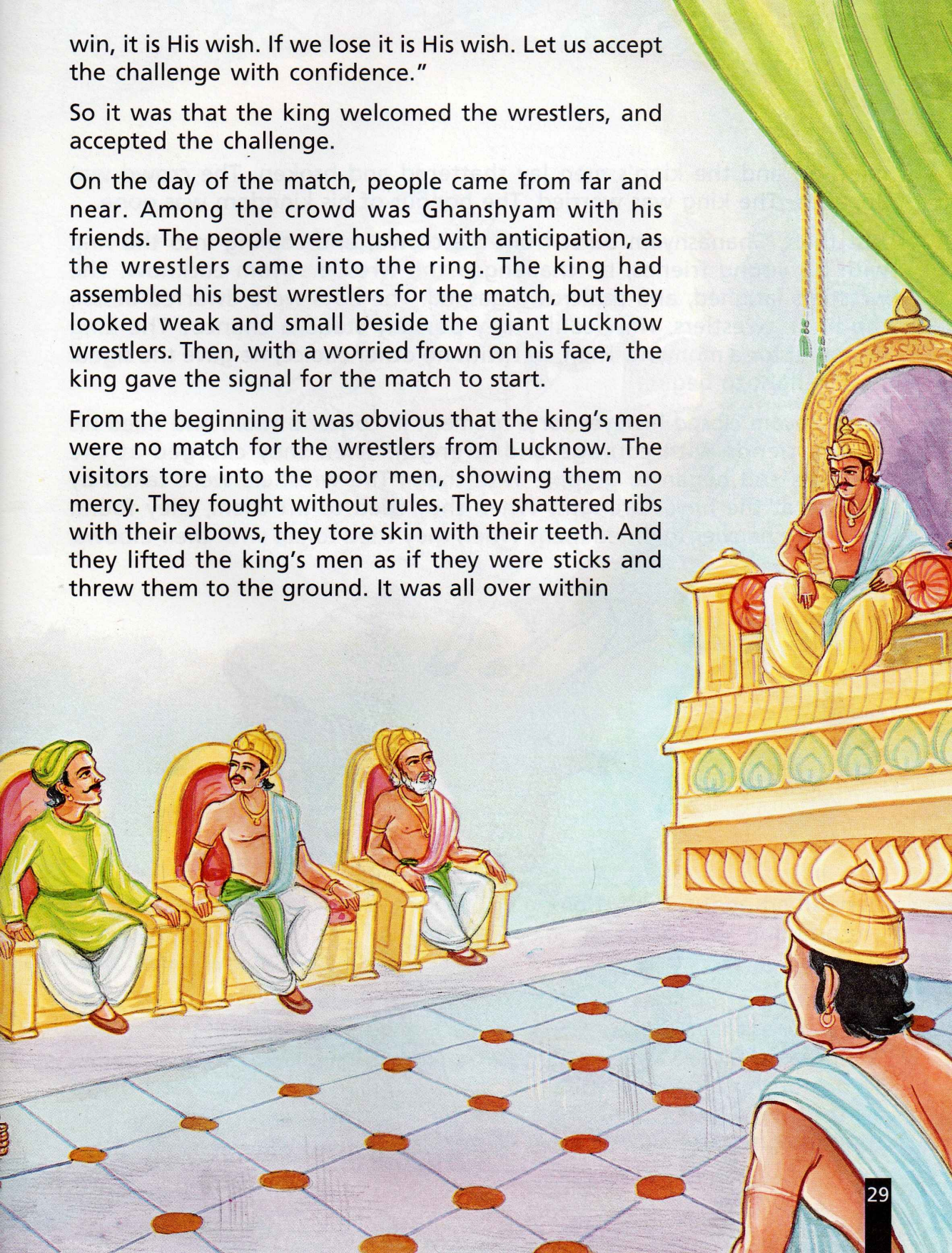


win, it is His wish. If we lose it is His wish. Let us accept the challenge with confidence."

So it was that the king welcomed the wrestlers, and accepted the challenge.

On the day of the match, people came from far and near. Among the crowd was Ghanshyam with his friends. The people were hushed with anticipation, as the wrestlers came into the ring. The king had assembled his best wrestlers for the match, but they looked weak and small beside the giant Lucknow wrestlers. Then, with a worried frown on his face, the king gave the signal for the match to start.

From the beginning it was obvious that the king's men were no match for the wrestlers from Lucknow. The visitors tore into the poor men, showing them no mercy. They fought without rules. They shattered ribs with their elbows, they tore skin with their teeth. And they lifted the king's men as if they were sticks and threw them to the ground. It was all over within

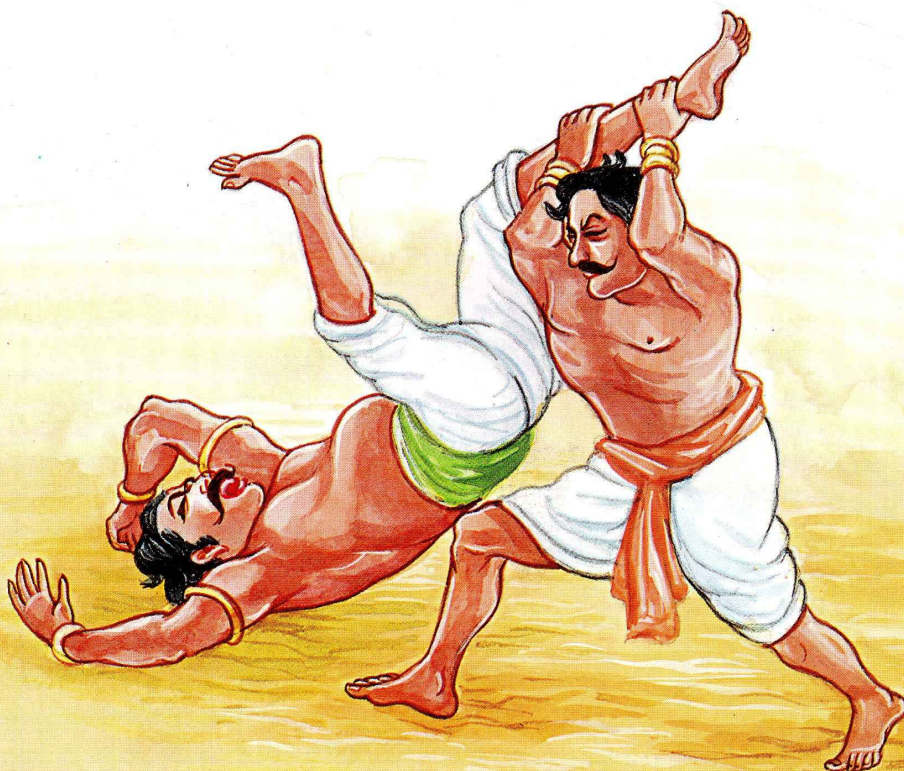




minutes, and the king's men lay shattered and broken. The crowd was appalled. The king was worried. The honour of his kingdom was gone.

Just then, Ghanashyam burst from the crowd, and coming into the ring with his young friends, he challenged the wrestlers from Lucknow. The wrestlers laughed, and the crowd gasped. The boys were dwarfed beside the huge wrestlers. How could they possibly stand a chance? The king hesitated for a moment. Then, left with no other choice, he gave the signal for the fight to begin.

Ghanashyam closed his eyes for a moment in concentration, and filled his young friends with courage and strength. Then they charged at the wrestlers and began to grapple with them. The wrestlers were taken by surprise at the boys' strength. When they tried to lift them, they found they were heavier than ten men! When they tried to jab with their elbows,



or bite with their teeth, the boys swiftly dodged them! It was a long and terrible fight. When Ghanashyam saw one of his friends tiring, he would look at him with his powerful eyes, and fill him with new strength. But soon it was the wrestlers who were tiring. As they became weaker, the boys' grew stronger. Then one by one the wrestlers began to fall, until at last only the leader of the wrestlers and Ghanashyam were still fighting. Finally, calling up his super-human strength, Ghanashyam lifted the giant high above his head, and smashed him to the ground. The fight was over.

The crowd went wild with joy, and the king rushed forward and embraced Ghanashyam.

"You have saved the honour of the people of Ayodhya!" he said, and he presented Ghanashyam with the wrestlers' golden statue award.

But Ghanashyam had no real interest in fighting and winning awards. His only aim in life was to serve humanity. And so he used the twenty-five kilos of gold to serve the poor, and to bring enlightenment and happiness to the people of the world.





STUDY:

1. Where is Lucknow? Can you find it on a map of India?
2. How much gold was in the statue?
3. How were such small friends of Ghanashyam able to beat such huge wrestlers?
4. Fill in the blank. "Ghanashyam saved the _____ of the people of Ayodhya."
5. What was Ghanashyam's only aim in life?

