

Selected stories<sup>†</sup>  
† from  
† Hindu Mythology<sup>‡</sup>

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## **The story of Prahlad, the son of daemon king Hiranyakashipu**

Once there was a powerful Asura king Hiranyakashipu on earth. He had one brother Hiranyakhsha and one sister Holika. This king Hiranyakashipu was a bad person in nature and so were his brother and sister. The two daemon brothers Hiranyakhsha and Hiranyakashipu used to disturb the Rishis (the Hindu saints) and the Gods every time and also did harms to their subjects. They were merciless to their people. Nobody except Asuras were living in peace in the kingdom.

So all the peace - loving people along with the rishis and Brahmins, and the Gods prayed Lord Vishnu to save them from these two wrong-doers. The kind hearted Lord Vishnu killed the brother of the Asura king Hiranyakashipu in His boar form ie the Varaha Avatar. The death of Hiranyakhsha made the Asura king Hiranyakashipu angry with Lord Vishnu. To defeat the Lord in fight, Asura Raj Hiranyakashipu did a very deep Tapasya (strong prayer) of Lord Brahma. At his prayer, Lord Brahma was pleased with him and wanted to give the Asura king a boon of his choice. The king wanted to be immortal. But Lord Brahma did not give him the blessing of immortality. Instead He gave him the blessing of not being killed in day or at night, not within a room nor outside the room, not on the ground

nor in the sky and not by any weapon used in the war at that time by the men or the Gods.

So you find that the Asura king became nearly immortal. He then wanted to fight with Lord Vishnu and became hater of the Lord. All the people, Brahmins, and the Gods were fearful of him. The king told his men to worship him only and asked his countrymen to stop worshipping Lord Vishnu. Everybody followed his directions but his own son Prince Prahlad did not. Little Prahlad was devoted to the creator Lord Vishnu.

The king wanted to make his son Prahlad forget Lord Vishnu. And asked his two loyal servants Shanda and Amarka the two powerful daemons teach Prahlad against the Lord. They did their best but Prahlad did not leave his prayer for the God Vishnu. This piece of information of their failure reached the ears of the daemon king. The king became very angry with Prahlad. He found that his son was on the side of his enemy Lord Vishnu.

He ordered his men to throw Prahlad from the top of a cliff to the rolling sea water. Prahlad's hands were tied and he was thrown to the sea. To the king's men's surprise, a beautiful Lotus flower floating on the sea accepted little Prahlad on its petals. The Lord saved His devotee with love.

The king heard everything. He was beside himself with anger. He told the forces to put his son before a mad elephant. They obeyed the king. Prahlad was put in front of a mad elephant. But to everybody's surprise, the elephant in lieu of killing the prince took him on its back with care.

The daemon king turned restless. Every time he was defeated by his enemy Lord Vishnu.

He told the army men to throw his son into the pit of the poisonous snakes. They carried out the order. Prahlad was dropped into the pit. But what a miracle! the snakes vanished and all present there found Prahlad singing prayer of Lord Vishnu.

The king told his sister Holika to plan a way to kill Prahlad. The wicked Sister of the king suggested of entering a big fire taking Prahlad in her lap. She was blessed by Lord Brahma not to be burnt by fire. So the result would be the death of Prahlad being burnt. As was the thought so was the action. Holika took Little Prahlad in lap and entered a big fire. But Holika forgot one warning from Lord Brahma. If she used the boon for evil purpose the fire would burn her. So what happened? Holika was burnt to death but The Prince was again saved by the Lord.

The daemon king lost temper at being defeated everytime by Lord Vishnu and took his son to the palace and asked the son, "Is your Vishnu present in this pillar?"

Prahlad politely answered "Yes Father. He is always anywhere and everywhere."

The angry king kicked the pillar and broke it. And with thunder like sound Lord Vishnu came out in His Narasimhan form ie His upper part is of Lion and the lower part is of man. The Lord in heavy battle with the daemon king killed him. He took the king on His thigh and tore open the king's belly with nails. The time of this battle was evening ie neither day nor the night.

The fight ended at the middle of the door ie neither within the room nor outside the room. The killing of the Asura Raj did not violate the boon.

The Prince Prahlad was then put in the throne. And Lord Vishnu asked him to pray for a boon. The Prince wanted to have faith in the Lord throughout his life. Lord Vishnu blessed him with this boon and disappeared.

Then King Prahlad ruled his kingdom with peace and justice for long and then leaving the throne to his son Virochon he went to Vishnulok for ever.

## **The Story of Tadoka Rakhsashi and her children as in the Ramayana**

**T**hat was a very nice day in the kingdom of Ayodhya. The great king Dasharatha was talking with his Guru Vasishtha for the arrangements of his son Prince Ram's placement on throne within a few days. Ram was on his one side and the brother Laxman was on the other. Ram and Laxman were very lovely duo. The sweet air was blowing. The birds were singing. The flowers of different colours and smells blossomed in the royal garden. All were happily waiting to see their new king Sri Ram on the throne.

Suddenly the dazzling sky was overcast with black clouds, the crows flew shouting in high pitch and something fearful was assumed by all. Within a few moments the reason of fear was clear.

The angry Rishi Visvamitra appeared in the royal court.

The king attended him to make him happy and politely wanted to know what he had come for. Rishi replied that he was in need of Ram and Laxman. They would kill the daemons that disturbed during Yajna (sacrificial fire for worship) of the sages in the states Malada and Karusha.

The king prayed to leave the princes and instead he himself sought permission for fight with the daemons but Visvamitra stuck to his point. At the advice and encouragement from Guru Vasishtha Raja felt strength and courage and sent Ram and Laxman with Visvamitra Rishi hoping that no danger would come to them.

The Rishi Visvamitra on the way told Ram and Laxman the story of Tadoka rakhsashi and her Children Marich and Subahu. The place where these daemons lived were nice states previously. The Rakhsashi and her children turned the places a deep human less jungle. The sage told them that the father of Taroka was a Yakhsa (One between the God and the man). His name was Suketu. He was a king. He prayed Lord Shiva for male child but he had a female child. He kept his daughter's name Tadoka. When Tadoka was aged she was married to a Yakhsa king Sunda. One day Sunda was drunken and attacked Rishi Agastya out of his intoxication. Agastya cursed him to death. This incident made Tadoka angry with Agastya Rishi and she broke everything in the hermit's cottage. Agastya was in fury and cursed Tadoka to turn into a Rakhsashi and her children Marich and Subahu into the rakhsasha. These daemons jointly made the nice states on Saraju the big forest.

On reaching the forest Visvamitra asked Ram to choose any of the two paths, one going through the forest and the other bypassing it. The road through forest bore the danger of Tadoka's attack.

Hearing this Ram smiled and requested the saint follow the forest path. Hardly had they advanced a few

steps along the path, they heard a thundering sound and faced the storm of air which meant that Tadoka was coming. Ram stood with his bow and arrows fearlessly and the moment Tadoka appeared Ram killed her with only one arrow. The Rishis, the Gods and all the persons collected there blessed and praised Ram.

Then they went to the hermitage of the sages for killing the other daemons.

At the evening when the fire in sacrificial pot was lit up the daemons appeared in hundreds and threw blood, flesh etc into the fire. Ram and Laxman had flung arrows to the rakhsashas. The big rakhsash Marich was flown away to the sea and Subahu was killed by Agni (fire) arrow of Ram. The other daemons died of the arrows of Laxman. Marich did not die. It took shelter in Sri Lanka, the kingdom of Ravana. Marich had the power of changing his appearance. He used this power to deceive Ram and Sita in Panchavati.

He took the form of a gold skinned deer. At the request of Sita Ram chased the deer to catch it alive. But he could not. Finding the arresting of deer was not possible; Ram killed it by an arrow. Before dying, the deer took its daemoniac form and shouted in Ram's voice. This daemoniac trick clicked in kidnapping Sita from the hut by Ravana in absence of Ram and Laxman.

The story of Tadoka and her children ended there.

After the death of Tadoka Rakhsashi, sages were very pleased with Ram and Laxman's victory over the daemons and from the bank of Saraju they went to the nearby kingdom of Mithila where Svayamvar Sabha (the assemblage of kings for choice of the husband from

among them by the bride herself) was about to start. There Ram won Sita in Svayamvar Sabha and married her. On returning Ayodhya, Dasaratha, Ram's father was preparing for Ram's accession to throne of Ayodhya.

By the conspiracy of Kaykeyi the step mother of Ram, he lost the chance of ascending throne and went to forest on exile. He was accompanied by Sita and Laxman.

In Panchavati Ram faced Marich and the story was as above.

## **The story of unparalleled sacrifice told in the Mahabharata.**

**T**he Kurukshetra war was at its end. Though some soldiers were still alive in the Pandavas side but nobody were alive in the Kouravas side. Bhima killed Duryadhana, the eldest of the hundred Kourava brothers. Aswatthama along with Kripacharya and Kritavarma killed the sons of Pandavas. Lord Krishna punished Aswatthama and revived Parikhsit from death by His godly power. Now Yudhisthira was placed on throne of Hastinapur. He then arranged for Aswamedh Yajna. (sacrificial worship of horse)

The story begins from this time.

It was a day of summer. The fields were dry. After the war, alms were not easily available in the households. A famine like condition was there in the Hastinapur. So was the condition of Khandav Prastha.

On one day a Brahmin was out for begging. He was the poorest of the poor. He had to feed his wife, two sons, two daughters, and father and mother. His parents were very old and dependent on the Brahmin. The Brahmin had no stable income. He managed his family on the alms. When the Kurukshetra war was not started the households were much well off. The residents of Hastinapur and surrounding areas could give beggars sufficient food stuff for their living. So the Brahmin did not have much struggle to live on.

The war put a great hardship on the beggars. Their living was nearly to an end.

The Brahmin was walking through the meadows of Khandav Prastha. Once there was a big forest. Lord Krishna and Arjun burnt it. Since then the place was less productive. The Brahmin thought that had he got some food corns in this semi barren land he would thank the God. The next moment he thought why God should be so merciful on him. His hard luck never gave him anything so easily. With the passage of time the heat of the Sun increased. The walking through the field was becoming stressful. He thought that he was very much unlucky to be born there. Seeing in the mean time a big shadowy tree the Brahmin wanted to take some rest. For the last three days he and his family did not have a grain to eat. Today he did not have a drop of water to drink while begging. He lamented how cursed was he. He looked up. The leaves of the tree were densely arranged and the Brahmin felt pleasure under it. Suddenly one thing caught his sight, a handful of corns. Yes corns. The Brahmin was joyous to see the food. It might be handful but for the Brahmin it was enough. The Brahmin took up all the grains in his cloth and started for home.

He returned a long distance. The Sun was still hot. The heat was near to burn the skin. He somehow managed to walk. He developed two blisters below his feet. But he did not stop. The only thought that came to his mind was that he had to reach home at the earliest.

When he stepped on the door of his hut it was afternoon. He called his wife and asked to make dust of corn. He asked his children to bathe. He himself

prepared for bath. There was a small pond on the back of his cottage. The water there was used for both bathing and drinking. The Brahmin's parents were ready. They were happy to see their son.

Now all of them were ready for lunch. The corns were ground and the Brahmin's wife divided the corn dust among themselves. All were happy to get food how much small might that be after three long days.

The Brahmin first of all dedicated the corn dust to the God and prayed for similar blessings in future. Then all of them made prayer.

No sooner had the prayer ended than a Brahmin guest appeared before the door. He wanted some food. He told that he did not get food for last five days. If the Brahmin host provided him with food he would be very much grateful. The guest was always The God. So poor Brahmin washed the guest's hands and feet. He gave him asan (a piece of cloth to sit.) Then he gave the guest his share of corn dust. The Brahmin guest relished the food. He drank a little water and said, "You see, I am not satisfied with this much of food. Can you manage some more for me?" Before the Brahmin said anything, his wife said, "Why not Vagoban, take my share. You are guest. Your satisfaction is blessing to us." The Brahmin's wife gave the guest her food crops. The guest Brahmin ate the corn dust and was happy. On finishing the share he said, "Look, my hunger still remains. Can I have some more food grains?" The host Brahmin said "Why not Vagoban. Take my children's share." The guest Brahmin was pleased at it and said "Very nice. Give me your children's share." The host Brahmin acted likewise. The guest ate corn dust and

said " Do you have some more? " The host Brahmin gladly gave the share of his parents and said "Vagoban take this much of corn." The guest Brahmin ate the corns and drank water. Then he told that he needed some more food. But this time the host Brahmin was ashamed of his inability. He had not a single grain left. He politely said " Vagoban, forgive me, we have not a single grain left." Hearing this, the guest Brahmin changed from Brahmin to God and said" O Brahman, I am not your guest but the God of Death. I am The Yamaha. I came to test your ability to sacrifice. You succeeded excellently. Now I bless you. Come with me to the heaven. There you will live with your family in full pleasure". Saying this, God took the Brahmin family with him to heaven. Meanwhile a mongoose came there and rolled over the plate of food. One side of his body became gold at the greatness of offer of food. He then went to the Aswamedh yajna of Raja Yudhisthira and rolled over the food plates. But other part of his body was not gold. He then told the king the story and said "Raja, your food offering is not of that standard that the poor Brahmin showed to the God of Death."

The sacrifice of poor Brahmin has become legendary for the years to come.

## **The story of the legendary Rakhsash king Ghatotkacha, son of Bhima as in the Mahabharata.**

**T**he Rakhsasha king Ghatotkacha was the son of second Pandava Bhima and his rakhsashi wife Hidimbi. It's told that Ghatotkacha was born in grown up form. On birth he made pronam to his father Bhima and said that he would come to his service whenever he remembered him. Telling this he went into the deep forest with his mother. Bhima went to join his brothers and mother in Ekchakra city.

A long time passed after that. The great warrior son of the third Pandava Arjun and the sister of Lord Krishna, Suvadra, Avimanyu was on a - hunting in the Kamyak forest. While chasing a deer he came near to a lake. Seeing transparent clear water Avimanyu felt thirst. He stepped down from chariot and moved towards the lake. Suddenly his way was blocked by a Rakhsash. The daemon alerted him not to drink water. Avimanyu was angry with the daemon and to teach it a lesson put arrow in bow. Seeing Avimanyu ready for battle the Rakhsash took up Gada (mace) for defence. Soon a fierce battle came up. The great warrior Avimanyu was surprised. All his arrows were returned by gada. The Rakhsash was also happy to see the prince fight so long with him. Rakhsash said "How nice you fight young warrior! Your fight is like Arjun uncle."

Hearing father's name on the lips of Rakhsash Avimanyu was more surprised. He asked "Do you know my father?" The Rakhsash was taken aback and said "Are you son of Arjun uncle? How strange! I am your elder brother Ghatotkacha, son of your elder uncle Bhima. Come dear brother, let's embrace. What is your name?" Avimanyu was shameful to fight with his elder brother and begged to be pardoned. Ghatotkacha was joyous to see his brother and entertained him with royal care.

The other day Ghatotkach thought that what was meaning in life if he did not see his Lord standing before him with His loving eyes, cherubic smile and blessings in the sweetest voice in the world.

He started for Dwarka from Kamyak forest. He took the form of a Brahmin and walked. The best effect of pilgrimage is got if done on foot. So the Rakhsash king chose walking.

Reaching Dwarka he lost ways in the city. He felt it was his Pravu's trick. He whispered - OM namo Krishnay namo and moved on. Soon he reached a palace before which he found a peacock in feathers, a sweet smell was in air, a beautiful musical beats were coming and so many blue, red, yellow flowers were near the well lit up fountains. He felt he was very near to his Pravu. Ghatotkacha stepped up the stairs. In the first floor he found a nicely decorated door of a yellow coloured room. The door and the windows of this room were closed. Out of curiosity he pushed one window and saw in the room his Lord was sleeping on a golden cot.

He smiled and told to himself "Pravu, I know you are not sleeping. It is your trick. Here I sit at your door unfed, unbathed and uncared for till you take me in your arms." Ghatotkacha sat in meditation for his Lord. Soon after his deep meditation he heard a melodious musical voice, "Ghatotkacha, look here my son." He looked up. There stood Sri Vagoban on his back. Ghatotkacha closed his palms and made pronam. Lord Krishna took him near to His heart and said "Ghatotkacha you do not know what a big job you are born to do for. Ask for a boon my dear." Ghatotkacha wept and said "if you have so mercy on me Pravu, make me your servant forever. I want nothing else". Krishna said "Tathastu" (let it be so) Lord also said "So long there will be Hindu religion in the Yambudweep your name will be murmured on every lip."

The Kurukshetra war was on full swing. The Kouravas and the Pandavas were fighting neck to neck. Ten days of war passed with a great fall of Vishma Pitamaha in arrow bed. The Acharya Dron was leading the Kouravas.

Bhima and Arjun were in forefront of the Pandavas side. It was the next day of the day on which Avimanyu was killed. Arjun became furious in killing the Kouravas. He was trying to near at Jayadratha. The Kouravas were all set out to save Jayadratha. Soon the evening came down and Jayadratha came forward to see Arjun die in fire.

The moment Jayadratha came within the range of Arjun, Lord Krishna said "Parth, look, there is your target. Kill him." Arjun killed Jayadratha and Lord removed His Sudarshan Chakra from the Sun. It was

still twilight. That day war continued till midnight with big lamps (flambeau). Ghatotkacha joined the Pandavas with one akshauhini rakhsash soldiers. At night the rakhsashas were terrible and indomitable. Nobody could win against Ghatotkacha. He became merciless in killing enemy soldiers. The rakhsash king Alambush was killed in his hand. Acharya Dron, Suryaputra Karna, Aswatthama, and Duryadhana - none could resist him. The rakhsash king Ghatotkacha was about to finish Kouravas that night. Duryadhana pressed Karna to throw Ekaghni arrow on the rakhsash. Karna kept this arrow for Arjun. Nobody could face this weapon but it could kill only one warrior. To his dislike Karna threw the Ekaghni arrow to Ghatatkacha under the pressure of Duryadhana.

Ghatotkacha employed full force to resist it but alas! the arrow killed him and got ineffective. He made his body mountain like big and fell on the Kourava soldiers. One akhsauhini soldiers died of pressure under his body.

A great soul was dedicated for a noble cause.

## **The story of the daemon king Kamsa, as in the Mahabharata**

Once in the past, Ugrasen was the king of Mathura. His queen was Padmavati. Queen Padmavati was a pretty lady. She used to walk in the royal garden every evening. It was her past time. One day the daemon king Dravil came to her in the guise of Ugrasen. The queen mistook him as her King and received a child from him. Then Dravil went away giving his real identity to the queen. The next day Dravil died of this falsity. He had such a curse on him. Queen Pdmavati also could not tell this story to anybody. The child was growing up with royal care. The name of this boy was kept Kamsa.

When Kamsa was young, one day he saw in his room, the soul of Dravil the Danava (daemon) king. The soul of Dravil asked for funeral water from Kamsa. Kamsa promised him water on asking his mother Padmavati. Queen Padmavati told her son the story of his birth. Kamsa was angry with his mother for not telling this earlier. Since then, he used to be (behaved like) a man in the day time and a daemon at night. He had very much power in his hands and body. He was also able with weapons. He had one sister named Devaki. She was also a pretty lady. When Devaki was aged she was married to Vasudev, a friend of Kamsa. After a few days, Prince Kamsa took out his sister and brother - in - law from palace on a chariot to enjoy evening travel. He was in a good mood. Suddenly a

celestial voice made prophecy that eighth son of Devaki would kill Kamsa.

The scene changed. Kamsa was about to kill his sister. But Vasudev stood against his sinful act. He promised to hand over Devoki's sons to Kamsa at the moment they would be born. Kamsa put the couple in prison. He put his parents also in jail. From that day he became tyrannical. Devoki's seven children were killed by Kamsa. The eighth child was Lord Vishnu in the form of avatar (incarnation). His name was Krishna. When Krishna was born the door of the prison got opened by itself. Vasudev was asked by a heavenly voice to take the child to Gokuldham and put a female child in its place. In Gokul the Nanda queen gave birth to this female child.

The next day Kamsa was about to kill this baby when the baby said that Kamsa's killer was growing in Gokul. Saying this, female baby vanished.

Kamsa feared this prophecy. He sent his foster mother Putana to Gokul. Putana would kill baby Krishna. But instead Putana herself was killed by little Krishna.

Kamsa got angry with this. He asked Kaliya Nag (a highly poisonous snake) to kill Krishna. Kaliya came to the Yamuna River near Gokul and vomited poison. All the Gokulbasi (inhabitants of Gokuldham) were about to die of this poison. Seeing this Lord Krishna ordered Kaliya to leave the Yamuna River. But Kaliya did not. Then little Lord dived into the river. He had a terrifying battle with the snake. The snake was defeated. Little Krishna danced on its hood. He asked the snake that why it vomited so much poison. The

dying snake replied that the Lord gave it poison so it vomited poison. Had it been given amrit (holy nectar) it would give out amrit.

So this time also Krishna was saved.

The puzzled Kamsa was out of his wit. He could not fix how to kill Krishna. He was in deep thought. The day passed and the night came. Kamsa was walking on the roof of his palace. Suddenly he saw two giants taller than the highest mountain were walking at a distance. Kamsa hatched a plan seeing them. He called in the two giants. He asked them to kill Krishna and put Nandgaon into sixes and sevens. He promised them rewards.

As was the order so was the action. The daemons reached Nandgaon and raised a storm. Balaram the elder brother of Krishna held one giant by leg and had thrown it circling over head. The big daemon being thrown fell directly on Kamsa's palace with a big thud. The other giant wanted to catch Krishna. But Krishna raised his palm where from a fire ball came out. This fire ball chased the daemon. When the giant was flying away he was burnt in the fire ball just near the Kamsa's palace. Seeing these two reliable giants die a poor death Kamsa sent his general Chikur danava (daemon) to bring Krishna alive. He desired to kill Krishna himself. The danava appeared in the grazing field of Nandagaon and picked up Little Krishna from among the cowboys there. Then putting him on shoulder the wicked ran towards Mathura. But he felt soon that the Little Lord was growing heavier in weight. A few minutes later Lord Krishna developed such a weight that Chikur was nearly pasted on the ground and died.

Kamsa found that all his attempts to kill Krishna were failing. He thought to bring Krishna in Mathura by hook or by crook. Then he would give Little Lord a poor shameful death. Alas! Had he known who the Lord Krishna was! He came to the earth to relieve it of Kamsa's tyranny. He was Narayan in the form of man. He was born to give Kamsa the Moksha or the freedom from pains of living. It was pre decided.

So the invitation went to Krishna Balaram from Mathura Naresh (the king) for taking part in wrestling and such other games. Lord felt that Kamas's end was very near. So He would have to go.

In Mathura the arena was decorated nicely. So many participants came there. Krishna was put before a mad elephant; the elephant calmly took its Lord on its back. Next Chanur daitya (daemon) attacked Krishna but its condition was pitiable after the fight. Krishna killed all the daemons one after another. Ultimately Lord Krishna killed the daemon king Kamsa.

The earth became free of one sinful miscreant.

## **The story of Magadha Naresh (King) Jarasandha, as in the Mahabharata.**

**I**n the old age, there was a big kingdom called Magadha in our country, India. It was famous in both the power and the riches. The king of this kingdom was Raja Vrihadratha. He was a good king. In his rule, his country men were happy and peaceful. The king looked after them like his sons and daughters. But alas! the king did not have his own child. He loved his two queens who were the daughters of king of Kashi. With the queens the king Vrihadratha was living happily but he was sorry for his childlessness.

He prayed the God and performed so many worships but had no result. Long time passed but nobody could please the king.

One day a saint named Chanda Koushika came to Magadha. The saint had some godly power. He could satisfy the sorry people. So many countrymen of the kingdom went to him for blessings. They were happy by his blessings. Soon the fame of the sannyasi (saint) spread far and near. The king heard of him and wished to see the saint. The king's servant brought in him before the king. The king told the saint about his sorrows. The sannyasi Chanda Koushika gave him a holy fruit to give his queens. The king divided the fruit into two halves and gave each queen one half. Soon the

queens gave birth to one half of human child each. This looked painful and so the sad king asked his men to throw the halves in the forest. No sooner the king's men had left the jungle, than there came a rakhsashi (daemoness) named Jara. The rakhsashi took the pieces of child in two hands and joined them. The moment the pieces were joined the child became alive and cried very loudly. Jara was surprised at this also. Though she was hungry but she could not eat the child. She had love for the boy and gave it to the king. She told him what happened. The king was beside himself with joy. He gave so many gifts to the rakhsashi and named his son Jarasandha.

In the memory that Jara joined the halves of the child the name Jarasandha was given to the prince.

The prince grew up with care. He became a good warrior and was an expert in Gadajudha (fight with Gada) When Jarasandha grew up into youth he had two sons one Sahadeva and the other Jayatsena. His two daughters were Asti and Prapti. When Jarasandha was king in Magadha, the Mathura was ruled by an asura (daemon) king Kamsa. The asura Kamsa too was a powerful fighter and came in good book of the king Jarasandha for his might. King Jarasandha gave his two daughters on marriage with Kamsa and made his kingdom stronger than before.

After the marriage of Kamsa, Lord Krishna killed Kamsa in course of time. This made the king Jarasandha angry with Krishna. His daughters became widow at the death of Kamsa. Since then Jarasandha was hatching plan to punish Krishna. When Lord Krishna ascended the throne of Mathura, the Magadha

Naresh Jarasandha attacked Mathura seventeen times with twenty akshauhini (nearly millions) soldiers but every time was defeated by Lord Krishna and Lord Balaram. In his eighteenth attack Jarasandha was supported by one Yavana (from foreign origin) king named Kalayavana and did a fierce battle with Lord Krishna. Lord knew that Yavana king could not be killed in the battle field as was his boon so the Lord killed him by tricks. In the mean time disturbed by Jarasandha's repeated attacks, Krishna asked Visvakarma to make city Dwarka near the sea. It was built overnight. Krishna shifted the capital to that city. Now Jarasandha did not know anything about this. He set Mathura on fire. He thought that with Mathura Krishna and Balaram died of burning.

But soon he came to learn that Krishna Balaram were alive. Meanwhile Jarasandha defeated ninety kings of Aryavarta (Northern India) and put them in jail. He was trying to make sacrifice of hundreds of kings. He believed that this will make him more powerful than the Gods. The rise of power of Magadha was a matter of fear for the Pandavas. The Pandava King Yudhisthira was thinking of doing Rajsuya Yajna. To make this performance possible he sent his two brothers Bhima and Arjun to Magadha with Lord Krishna to overpower Jarasandha. They wore the dresses of Brahmins and went to Magadha. There they asked Jarasandha to fight with any one of them. Jarasandha chose Bhima and fight started. Bhima tried several times to tear open Jarasandha. But every time he failed to kill him tearing. Seeing this Lord Krishna hinted him to throw the two parts of Jarasandha in

opposite directions. This time Bhima succeeded. The body parts did not join now.

Jarasandha died.

The Magadha was freed from misrule of Jarasandha. The ninety kings were released of jail.

The glory of Lord Krishna and the Pandavas was once more proved. Krishna put Sahadeva the son of Jarasandha on throne. Sahadeva fought in Kurukshetra in favour of the Pandavas and was killed by Karna.

## **The story of Sudama, the childhood friend of Lord Krishna**

**I**t was a bright sunny day. Little Krishna along with Sudama, Basudama, and the other milkmen's children went to tend cows in the field. The day passed nicely. Krishna played flute. Sudama sang the songs. All the milkmen's children attended them with pleasure. When it was afternoon, the sky was filled with black clouds. A storm came up. Soon a heavy rain set in. The boys with Krishna and Sudama took shelter under a big tree. Sudama was fearing the lightning and the other boys were fearful also. But Krishna gave them courage.

After some time the storm stopped and the rain came to an end. Then the little boys saw their fathers and Guru Sandipani coming to take them home. All the Gokul (the village where Sudama was born in) was in tension for the little children. Sudama told all the villagers, how Little Krishna gave them courage and saved from danger. From this day the friendship between Krishna and Sudama deepened.

It is told that in previous birth Sudama was in Golokdham, the place of Lord Vishnu. There for some reason, Radha cursed Sudama and he took birth in Gokul to a very poor Brahmin family.

In Gokul (very near to Vrindaban) Sudama received close friendship of Krishna. He was also the

class mate of Krishna in gurukul (run by Guru) school of Sandipani.

Though Sudama was poor, his dresses were torn but Krishna loved him deeply. The simplicity of Sudama endeared him to Krishna. Lord does not judge wealth but simplicity and love. Krishna was, as to all, the eyes of Sudama. He found and feel Krishna everywhere. So profound was his love for the Lord Krishna.

After a long time, Lord Krishna became the king of Dwarka and was married to Rukmini.

Sudama was also grown up and married to a poor Brahmin girl Susheela. They had two children. Out of poverty Sudama could not maintain his family. He was going through very much hardship. They had not the both ends meet.

One day on Akhsay Tritiya (the third day of bright fortnight of Hindu month Vaishakha) Susheela told her husband Sudama to go to Lord Krishna and beg some help. But Sudama did not want to go. He found this act beneath his dignity. However considering request from Susheela and the children, Sudama went to Dwarka. There he got darshan (holy visit) of his beloved Lord. His heart was filled with joy to see the face of his childhood friend. Lord Krishna was also beside himself with pleasure. The two bosom friends talked for long time. They went down the memory lane.

In the mid day meal the Lord offered His friend fifty six Vogs (food items) as royal entertainment.

The two friends ate the lunch merrily. At the end of meal The Lord said to Sudama " I am not satisfied

friend with this food. You did not feed me anything. So I am not happy." Of this Sudama was ashamed. He said "Hey dear, what I shall give to you, I am so poor." The Lord smiled at his friend's simplicity and said "You have brought a handful of rice for me. But you did not give it. So I am still so hungry." Sudama said shamefully "Yes my dear, I have brought a handful of rice for you. This much I could have gathered. I have not the ability beyond this. If you take this rice kindly, I shall be happy." The Lord said smilingly "Don't waste time dear, give me your rice. I can hardly stay without the rice. Don't you see I am hungry?" Sudama put the rice on the Lord's thali (big plate) and He ate the rice with full satisfaction. Then he drank water and said "What nice sweet rice you have given me dear! My hunger is totally gone." Sudama was also happy to see his friend happy.

At the evening Sudama bade good bye to his Friend and started for his home. He could not beg alms at his Lord. When Lord asked him to want something from Him, he prayed for only love and nothing else. Lord Krishna smiled and granted the prayer.

Thinking about the unforgettable time spent with Krishna, Sudama was returning home. When he was very near to his hut, he could not believe his eyes. Where was his hut! There instead, stood one seven storied palace with beautiful decoration. A band of the singers and the dancers greeted him. They led him to his palace with honour. Sudama was no longer a poor. He had the wealth of the kings.

Sudama felt the meaning of smile he found on the lips of his friend. He prayed for love and got the boon of wealth.

Sudama showed the world that Love of the God is more than the wealth of the Kings. Here ends the story of Sudama, the best friend of Lord Krishna.

## **The story of Ilval and Vatapi, two daemons as in the Valmiki Ramayana**

**L**ong ago, in the age of the Ramayana, two bad daemons lived in this land. One was Ilval and the other was Vatapi. The daemon Ilval was blessed with a boon of making a dead one alive. His brother Vatapi had the power to change his form or look. He could transform himself into any animal ie goat. These two asuras used their powers to kill the Brahmins who would go through the jungle and ate their flesh.

To deceive the Brahmins or travellers who would pass through the forest, Ilval used to put on a guise of Brahmin and appeared before the simple travellers weeping. The daemon would tell them that he lost his parents a few days back and requested them to take part in a funeral feast. He acted so nicely that the Brahmin travellers could not catch his falsity. They would agree to take part in Brahmin Vojan (holy feast).

The Brahmins followed Ilval to his cottage and found the funeral arrangements. They could never feel that all these arrangements were false, a trick. Before them the daemon would perform puja (worship) so nicely that the poor persons could hardly get at the tricks in all these things. Rather they would have been pleased to have a good Vojan (lunch).

Soon after the false rituals were over, Ilval would bring a goat for sacrifice. This goat was none other than Vatapi. I told you that Vatapi had the magical power to transform himself into any animal. This time he had made himself a goat. Ilval cut the goat in everybody's presence and prepared a nice dish.

The Brahmin invitees were happy to see this. At that time the Brahmins also take red meat in their vojan. And in last rituals the custom was to serve meat of the goat. So long everything was nicely acted by the two daemons and the poor Brahmins could not catch the trick.

Then the elder daemon Ilval served meat to the invitees. The guests ate the lunch with full satisfaction. Now they felt for some rest. Finding this was the right time to make Vatapi alive, Ilval would call his brother in loud voice. Then the daemon Vatapi would come out from the guests tearing open their belly. The Brahmin guests died and the two killers made a gala feast with human flesh.

In this way the two miscreants killed so many Brahmins who would pass through the jungle. This piece of information reached the ears of one great sage Agastya. He thought to punish these two asuras.

In the simple dress and guise of general passer-by the Rishi was crossing the forest on one morning.

When He was in the middle of the jungle he saw a Brahmin was coming towards him. The Rishi understood that this Brahmin was none other than the daemon itself. But He did not let the daemon catch his mind. Ilval in disguise called in him and appealed for

taking part in Brahmin vojan. The reason he put up was his father's death like that. Rishi Agastya was waiting for this moment. He seemingly hesitated and then agreed to accept invitation.

Ilval was happy to get a nice prey that day. He showed Agastya so many courtesies and thanked him for accepting invitation.

Rishi made no reply but just followed him. Soon they reached the daemon's hut. There the daemon showed him so much care.

Rishi sat on the asana (a carpet like piece of woollen cloth) and daemon started rituals. Soon he finished his false puja etc and brought in the goat for sacrifice. He cut the goat and prepared its meat for the Rishi. Alas! had he known the thought of the Rishi, he might not invite him. The wicked then arranged meat on a thali (big plate) and kept before the Rishi.

The Rishi ate the meat with satisfaction and rubbed his belly with his hand. He whispered that Vatapi, you go digested. Vatapi was digested. Now Ilval did not understand the power of the Rishi. He mistook him with other Brahmins. He shouted in the name of Vatapi. But to no avail. The Rishi said, "Vatapi will not come Ilval, he is digested. His soul has gone to hell." These words made Ilval angry and he took his own daemoniac form. With his long sword he attacked Rishi Agastya. The Rishi looked at him with angry eyes and the asura was burnt to ashes.

Thus Rishi Agastya saved so many lives from the hands of the wicked asuras, Ilval and Vatapi.

## **The story of Satyakam, a great saint and the son of poor Jabala.**

**I**t was a day break on the bank of the river Ganges. Long ago, in the hut of Saint Haridrumat Goutam the rishi boys (hermit boys) woke up for prayer in the morning. The rishi Goutam was busy to arrange samidh (wood and fuel like ghee etc) for yajna. He was preparing for sacrificial fire and worship of Fire God, Agni. There would also be the singing of pure hymns from the Vedas by the rishi boys. After that, the boys would go out to tend the cows and beg for food. These jobs of the boys were their noble duties at that time. The boys would also learn about Brahma, the knowledge of the supreme soul. Acharya (holy teacher) Goutam was famous as a Brahmajna (having the perfect knowledge of Brahma) Saint and so many men would send their children to him for learning. His fame of teaching was spread far and wide.

That day with the Sun rise the rishi just sat on his asana (a piece of skin of deer) when a lad of teenage, fair complexion, nice figure came to him and made pronam (salutations). Rishi looked up and lovingly asked "Who are you, my son?"

The boy politely replied "I am Satyakam, Gurudev."

He asked "What have you come for?"

Satyakam answered, "I want to have knowledge of Brahma from you, Gurudev." Rishi said, "What is your ancestral background? Are you a Brahmin?"

Satyakam said "I don't know my father or ancestors. I will have to ask my mother. I live only with her."

Rishi Goutam said to Satyakam "Well my son, come tomorrow knowing your ancestors."

Satyakam nodded his head and went away. Rishi began his lesson for the boys sitting there. Satyakam came to his cottage where his mother waited for him with anxiety.

Satyakam asked his mother about his ancestors. Poor Jabala, his mother, took him in her arms and broke into tears. She was sad to say that she did not know his father or ancestors. Out of poverty she served so many masters for living and so she did not know who Satyakam's father or ancestors were. She told her son to say this to the Rishi and beg mercy for not being a Brahmin doubtfully.

The next day with the Sun up in the sky, Satyakam set out for the hut of Rishi Goutam. When he reached there, the classes had already been started. Satyakam came gently before the Rishi and made pranam.

Rishi Goutam looked at him with questioning eyes.

Satyakam said politely " Lord I don't know my father or ancestors still I beg your kind teaching. I know only my mother who prayed for your mercy."

Rishi was so pleased to see his truthfulness that he could not sit anymore. He took Satyakam within his arms and accepted him as His best disciple. This rishi boy Satyakam completed his studies at his Gurudev Rishi Goutam with success and wrote many mantras (hymns) of Chhandogya Upanishadas. He learnt a large part of his Brahma jnan (knowledge) from four non - humans while tending cows. These non humans were an ox, a flame of fire, a duck and lastly a water bird. They taught him the Prakashban, the Anantaban, the Jyotishman, and the Ayatanban. These are four states of Brahma vidya (knowledge).

Having been taught these subjects Satyakam developed a glow in him. His Acharya felt happy to see him bright.

The Acharya satisfied him with full knowledge of supreme soul. Satyakam taught this subject to Upakosal, his dearest disciple and felt happy.

The story of Satyakam is known for his honesty and truthfulness which are rarely available today among the communities.

So before being an intelligent disciple one should be honest and truthful. This is the only way to success.

## **The story of Nachiketa from Kathopanishadas**

**L**ong ago in this land of India the Hindu sages would perform yajna, the sacrifice on fire. There were many yajnas in practice and they were popular too. Among them one of the costliest yajnas was Vishvajit Yajna. If anybody performs this yajna, he has to offer milch cows to all the Brahmins related with the fire worship. If this ritual was not at all or satisfactorily performed the effects of sacrifice remained untouched.

Now a sage Vajasrabas, the son of Vajasraba, wished to execute Vishvajit fire worship or sacrifice for hopefully making a direct way to heaven.

On completing the Yajna (sacrificial fire.) the sage brought in the weak, dying, poorly managing to live cows to give the Brahmins. His learned little son Nachiketa was fearful to see his father's unethical offers to the Purohits (the Brahmins looking into the quality of performance.) Nachiketa knew his father was committing sins. A knowledgeable son can't see his father unknowingly being a victim of curse from the Brahmins.

To stop him from doing wrong Nachiketa asked him to whom he was going to sacrifice his son Nachiketa.

The rishi at first overlooked his son but couldn't hold patience after repeated disturbances. He said "I give you to the God of death."

These were words from Rishi. These were sure to happen. So Nachiketa decided to go to Yamalaya (palace/courtyard of the God of death.) keeping his father's words.

Nachiketa reached Yamalaya but the Yamaha was not present. The Brahmin boy sat at His door unfed unslept uncared for three days and nights. This piece of information about the same reached the ears of the Yamaha. He returned hurriedly. Attended the Brahmin boy and promised three boons. Nachiketa prayed for his father's peace. This was one. Then he wanted to know the way to go to heaven. Lord Yamaha satisfied him with a reply. Next Nachiketa questioned the mystery of death. It was the top secret and men were not allowed to know. The Yamaha tried every way to please him otherwise. But Nachiketa stuck to his point. Lord Yamaha was ultimately bound to open up the mystery of death before Nachiketa. Nachiketa received Brahma vidya through the proper knowledge of death.

One, who comes to know the soul or inner self of one, becomes all powerful and strong. Death is not a spiritual ending of man but that's an end to mortal outer self.

The tree of the body is hosting two birds, one eats fruit and the other just sees. What do these mean? These are material self and spiritual self.

In this course of discussion Nachiketa learnt the unknowns of death. He returned home His mother

advised him to give all the elders pronam. Nachiketa modestly refused mother's advice because he wanted to make pronam to his father first. Father is the only God and he is truly the Lord to all men. One should bow before one's Father at first when he achieves success.

Nachiketa searched for his father everywhere but didn't find him.

Long after his return, a bearded hermit came to Nachiketa's hut and said to him "Dear son I am your father, do pronam me."

Nachiketa was surprised at it and asked why he went away for such a long time. The man replied lovingly " Dear, you are Brahmojno Rishi (sage who has realised Brahmo) I am a lay man. How can I take your pronam (salutations)!

So I went into the deep forest and did Tapasya (making indepth prayers for fulfilment of desire.) Now I have succeeded in realising Brahmo. I am equal to you. You may revere me; I will not feel guilty" Hearing this, Nachiketa kept his pronam at his feet.

Nachiketa felt happy. He lived merrily with his parents.

## **The story of the demoness Hidimbi, sister of daemon king Hidimbo as in the Mahabharata**

**W**hat a nice forest this was! The trees were all green. They were also bearing sweet fruits. The nearby lake was filled with clear water. Fine smell was in the air.

The Pandavas (sons of dead king Pandu of Hastinapur) came there fully tired. Except Bhima the second brother, others were totally exhausted. They needed a wink of sleep. Bhima brought them water. His brothers and mother drank it and slept. Bhima was sitting by their side to save them. He did not sleep.

You are thinking where they were! They were in the Kamyak ban (forest). This was a nice forest no doubt. But there lived one daemon king Hidimbo. He lived with his sister Hidimbi. Hidimbo was a terrifying rakhsash. He lived on human flesh. He would kill the passers - by who crossed the jungle.

That day Hidimbo saw the Pandavas and their mother in his kingdom. He was happy to see a good feast. So he sent his sister Hidimbi to bring them.

Hidimbi was not so cruel as her brother. She had good senses. She liked Bhima. She could not think of eating them. But her brother thought differently.

Hidimbi knew the art of changing face and body. She became a good looking woman. Then she came to Bhima. She asked Bhima "Who are you, Arya?"

Bhima replied briefly "We are Pandavas."

Hidimbi told him to leave the place with his brothers and mother. Bhima was surprised and asked "Why?"

Hidimbi said "You are in the kingdom of Hidimbo. He is a powerful daemon. He will eat you up."

Bhima smiled and said "Let the gentleman come. I shall have a nice meeting with him."

Hidimbi was fearful at his words. She said "You don't know him. Till now you have the time to escape, for God's sake, go away. If you want, I may take you to a safer place."

Bhima now burst into laughter. Seeing this Hidimbi said "You don't under estimate him. He is the most powerful rakhsash in the world"

Bhima amusingly said " I am the most powerful man in the world."

Soon a storm came up. The trees were about to break. The birds cried loudly. Finding Hidimbi's delay Hidimbo appeared there himself. He came down heavily upon Hidimbi. He caught her hair in one hand and that of Bhima in the other. Hidimbo didn't know Bhima. This Pandava was as strong as ten thousand elephants.

Bhima caught the rakhsash by neck and punched on its nose. Soon a fierce battle set in. Hidimbo fought a terrific fight. But he could not defeat Bhima.

With the magical power of Hidimbi Bhima overpowered Hidimbo. The rakhsash died at the end.

The fight continued till the evening. The other Pandavas woke up and saw the fight breathlessly. When the rakhsash was killed Kunti the mother of the Pandavas took Bhima in her arms and blessed. Seeing mother's care to Bhima, Hidimbi came before Kunti. She politely wanted to be married with Bhima. Kunti looked at her eldest son Yudhishtira. Yudhishtira felt that this marriage was just. He asked Bhima to wed Hidimbi. Bhima could never go against his brother. He was agreed to the marriage. Bhima and Hidimbi were then made couple.

They spent the year travelling in the Himalayas and the seas. Then a powerful son was born to them. Bhima kept its name Ghatotkacha.

After his birth Bhima left Hidimbi to join with the other Pandavas. Hidimbi stayed with her son.

In later life Hidimbi turned to a sannyasini (devoted woman).

In Manali of district Kulu of Himachal Pradesh under the lush cedar forest there is a temple made in 1553 for Hidimbi Devi, a goddess of tribals. Every spring, a fair is celebrated there. So many pilgrims come there every year.

Hidimbi is not a rakhsashi but a deity.

## **The story of Dhruva, the noblest devotee of Lord Vishnu as in the Vishnu Purana.**

“**S**awodhan (alert!) the honorable powerful Great King Utthanpada is coming” the door keeper of the palace shouted loudly.

Everybody was alerted. The king's horse stopped before the gate of the palace. The most beloved queen Suruchi walked towards the king. She had a golden plate in her hand. It was filled with sandalwood paste, flowers, vermilion, and such other things to wish the king. The younger prince, son of Suruchi, Uttama came running to greet his father. The king took him in the lap. Suruchi marked Chandan tilak (sandalwood mark) on the broad forehead of the king.

Nobody informed Suniti the king's other queen of the king's arrival. Suniti wept in her compartment. Her son was Dhruva. He asked why she was weeping. The queen took little Dhruva in her arms, loved and said "These are the tears of joy my little dear. Your father has come. I am so happy at it that I can't resist tears." Dhruva looked at her face deeply. He felt why his mother was shedding tears. He knew his father did not like his mother. All his father's liking was for his step mother and step brother. Dhruva was not sorry. He knew sorrow was the quality of the weak. He was not weak. He believed that Lord Vishnu was in his heart as

He is in everybody. One who realizes Him deep in one's mind is never weak. The sorrow doesn't enter his mind. So was Dhruva. He said to his mother, " Don't worry mother I shall bring my father to you." Saying this he went away running. When he neared the court he saw his brother Uttama being loved by his father. Dhruva was a broad minded child. He was not jealous of his brother but himself loved him rubbing his hand on brother's head. Dhruva put pronam to his father and said to him, " Father, please come to see my mother. She is waiting for you. She is weeping. Only once will you come to her? Please father."

Dhruva's earnest prayer touched the king. He could not say anything. He feared Suruchi. This queen had great control over him.

Suruchi held Dhruva by his hair and said, " What do you think of yourself? What does your mother do? You love Vishnu so also your mother. Ask him to take birth as my child. Then only the king will fulfill your prayers. Understand?"

Dhruva listened. He resolved to bid Lord Vishnu to fulfill the step mother's wish.

He was strict to his point. Suniti, his mother tried every way to keep him from going to the forest. But Dhruva was determined to persuade the Lord to bless him with boons.

Little child Dhruva set out for Tapasya (penance). He heard nobody's words. In Golok Lord Vishnu only smiled. His wife Devi Laxmi was alarmed to see little Dhruva in the jungle and said to Vishnu "Pravu, aren't you seeing little Dhruva is alone in the animal infested

forest? Do something my Lord." Lord smiled and said "Devi, look into his eyes. What are you seeing?" Devi saw to her surprise that the Lord himself was there with His amusing smile.

Devi Laxmi now closed her palms and said " Oh Lord, you are so kind, so merciful! I bow to you."

Dhruva didn't know anything about this. Soon he came across one Rishi with Veena in lap. He did not know him. The Rishi said "Dear son, where are you going in this deep Jungle? Don't you have a fear of animals? You look like a prince. Why are you here leaving the palace? What do you want?"

Dhruva made a pronam to Rishi and said "Vagoban I don't know you. Please give your identity."

The sage blessed little Dhruva and said "Don't you know me? I am Narada." Dhruva put pronam again.

He said, "I have come to this forest to do Tapasya to please my Lord."

Saint Narada appeared to be serious and said "Do you know how tough Tapasya is? Go back Dhruva. In the palace, enjoy life. The poor do Tapasya for food, clothes the riches etc. What are you in need of?"

Dhruva replied smilingly, "The only riches a man can need is the Lord's holy darsan (visit) and nothing else. I want to see my Provu in my front and touch his lotus feet."

Saint Narada lost hope and said "So you will not return! Well dear, I'll tell you one mantra, if you are in danger, chant it. Say with me - Om namo Vagabate Sri Vasudevay namo. You will get saved."

Saying this Narada Rishi disappeared.

Dhruva proceeded. Soon he came to a thorny marshy land. It spread far and wide. Dhruva understood that Provu was taking the test. He chanted the hymn that Rishi Narada taught and what a miracle! he felt no pain in treading thorns. Dhruva crossed the land and entered the deep forest. His feet were tinted with blood but he showed no sign of pains. He sat under a banyan tree and sank in deep meditation. The evening came. He chanted on - Om namo Vagabate Sri Vasudevay namo. His eyes were closed. The cheeks were tight. His Mind was fast stuck to the Lord's holy feet.

A tiger was found to come. It roared. Dhruva did not fear nor did he open his eyes. He thought if he became food to a hungry animal it would be a great service to the Lord.

The tiger went away. A snake came. Dhruva did not move. The King kobra was about to bite but Dhruva prayed - Om namo Vagabate Sri Vasudevay namo.

The snake became a garland.

A fiery circle got lit up around him. The flames were near to swallow him. But Dhruva prayed - Om namo Vagabate Sri Vasudevay namo.

Soon the fire blew out. A very sweet melodious voice was heard "Dear Dhruva, open your eyes my son, and see who has come."

Dhruva opened his holy eyes and found his Lord in his front. Dhruva lost words. He put himself on His feet. The Lord took him in His lap and told to pray for boons. Dhruva said "Provu if you are pleased with me, give me the boon of ability to compose hymns for you."

The Lord blessed him with this boon. Dhruva created Dhruva Stuti or Dhruva Pada.

At his Lord's advice, Dhruva returned home and was put to the throne. He ruled the kingdom with justice. He married two ladies, Brahmi and Ila and had three children. However he led the rest of his life as an ascetic even though surrounded by family.

Once his brother was attacked by Yakhsas (semi gods) and tortured. As revenge, Dhruva attacked the Alkapuri and killed many Yakhsas. At the advice of Swayamvuba manu his grandfather Dhruva left Yakhsapuri and Yakhsas were saved from his rage.

As a mark of love and devotion that Dhruva showed to Lord Vishnu he was put in the north sky the Dhruva lok by the Lord Himself. We now call him Dhruva Nakshatra. His life was the mark of righteousness and sacrifice for holy causes.

## **The amusing story of Bakasur badh (killing) in the Mahabharata**

**I**n the Kamyak ban (forest), Bhima, the second Pandava, the second son of dead king Pandu of Hastinapur married Hidimbi demoness. After a year-long trip from the Himalayas to the South Sea, Bhima left Hidimbi to join his mother and brothers in Ekchakra nagari (city). They were wandering in the dress of Brahmins. Escaping death in the lacquer cottage ablaze, the Pandavas and Kunti lost home. They went to Kamyak forest and there from they came to the nearby nice city Ekchakra. There in the city they were hosted by a Brahmin family.

The beauty of the city really beggared the description. On the north of this delightful land was a deep forest. Everything was no doubt beautiful. But one thing killed the joy of living. That was the coming of a dangerous Rakhsasha. It happened a little earlier than the arrival of the Pandavas to the city. The Pandavas did not know so much of it. They lived happily in the Brahmin's family. The five brothers would go out everyday for alms and at night ate food preparing from corn earned from begging. In pleasure they were spending time. Soon a piece of black cloud came up there on the Brahmin's family who gave them shelter. That day Bhima did not go out begging. He was relaxing in the room. Kunti was preparing for daily worship. Suddenly she heard a sobbing. Who could be

crying? Kunti alerted her ears. She felt the voice was coming from the eastern part of the cottage. There was the bedroom of the host family.

Kunti was surprised. What might have happened to them for their being so upset? Kunti tiptoed to their door. She set ear there. She heard that the Brahmin was weeping and saying

"I am so unlucky; I can't save my life to keep the members of my family alive. Oh Lord you survived me for this day.

Had I much power I could save all of us."

The wife of Brahmin wept and said " I am the only unlucky. If I die no harm will befall you. Let me go."

The son of the Brahmin cried and said " Leave me father, let me go. If I die no problem comes upon you."

Hearing this, all the members of the Brahmin family cried loudly holding each other.

Kunti felt that some major problems had reached them. Further waiting might worsen the situation, thinking so Kunti pushed into the room. Seeing Kunti they became a bit louder. Kunti did her best to calm them down. It took much time for the Brahmin family to come back to normal voices.

They told Kunti that a very big Rakhsash had come there. He lived in the dense forest on the skirt of the city. He himself declared the saviour of this city and its citizens. The giant had big power in hands. He was mountain-like high and had red blood like eyes. He had a big hunger. In the return to his saving the city, he demanded one thousand pitchers full of porridge and

the man's flesh who takes food to him. This arrangement was told by the daemon. If anybody violated the system, the whole city he would break.

So long the food was given to the daemon in turn. That day was their turn. They were unable to bear any one's separation forever. So long Kunti heard patiently. She now said "Vagoban! if you permit, one of my sons will go today instead of any of you."

The Brahmin immediately said with stress "No guest, no, this cannot be allowed. You are our God; we think the guest is next to God.

We can't see any of you dying."

Kunti smiled and said "Arya, my second son Bhima is as strong as ten thousand elephants and he likes killing rakhsash. So you feel free to bless him. Till now he has killed so many rakhsash and daityas and danavas. Nobody could touch his hair. Let me convert this opportunity of serving you to reality. Once you gave us shelter food dresses etc, now let us repay please". In the meantime Bhima appeared there. He heard a brief of incidents and became happy to go.

Kunti cooked porridge which had fine smell and fine taste of course.

Bhima said-" I can't wait a minute to start. My bosom friend Bakasura is waiting for long in the forest. Mother, finish the cooking."

After a little while Bhima's cart with thousands of pitchers carrying porridge started for the big jungle.

When Bhima reached the forest nobody was there.

He shouted "O brother Baka where are you? Come sharp. Your lunch is getting low. O dear Baka where have you hidden yourself?"

Bhima was calling the rakhsash Baka, at the same time emptying the pitchers.

Soon a strong wind started blowing. The forest shook heavily. The Baka came jumping and seeing some one else engaged in finishing his food, he became terrific angry and punched on Bhima's back. It appeared like massaging. On drinking the porridge Bhima stood up and uprooted a sal tree. Seeing this rakhsash uprooted a palm tree. A fierce battle set in. With passage of time the jungle went short of trees and they began wrestling. The Bakasur hit Bhima on the face. Enraged at it, Bhima kicked on his chest and the rakhsash was flung to a few hands distance and fell on the ground with a puzzling thud. Bhima now held him by his left leg and circled round overhead and thrown away to the distant pond. There the poor creature drowned. Next day its dead body surfaced. All the people heaved the sigh of relief.

## **The story of Garuda the vahana (mount) of Lord Vishnu as in the mythology**

**T**his is the hermitage of Rishi Kashyap. Here sweet breeze blows. The garden is full of flowers. The birds chirp. The smell of ripe fruits goes far by the air.

Here the Rishi drew pleasures of meditation. He lived here in peace. He had two wives. Vinata and Kadru. They are sisters. Their father is Prajapati Dakhsa. The two sisters are very close to each other. They looked after their husband with care. The Rishi liked them very much. Between the two sisters Vinata was rather simple. She was not of much merit. She looked at life with simple eyes. Her love for Rishi Kashyap was pure. She wanted the pleasure of her husband. She was happy about this. She was a straight forward woman. But Kadru was not like her sister. She was a little crooked. For personal need she could do harm to anyone she loved the most. She was outspoken. She wanted more love from her husband than her sister would want. There was under current envy in her mind for her sister. Kadru was very much self centred.

One day Kashyap Rishi wanted his wives to pray for boons. Kadru wanted a thousand children. She wanted to be the mother of snakes. Vinata wanted two children better than those of Kadru. The rishi said to them, "Tathastu"(let it be so), then he went to another

place for meditation. Vinata and Kadru stayed at the hut. In due course of time Kadru laid a thousand eggs. Vinata laid two eggs. After laying eggs they began hatching. Nearly five hundred years passed. The eggs of Kadru gave birth to a thousand snakes. Those snakes were all black in colour. But alas! Vinata's eggs did not hatch. Vinata cried. Her sister was showing her vanity. She was blessed with a thousand children. Vinata was angry with her fate. She was so restless that she broke the shell of one egg. Oh! no! a crippled baby came out crawling from the broken egg. His name was given Arun. Arun was reddish in colour. He was not as bright as the Sun. He was annoyed with his mother. She did not allow him enough time to grow fully. Arun cursed his mother to be a maid servant. He alerted her not to hurry in breaking the shell of the other egg. He warned her against the same folly not to be done on her second egg. Arun was appointed the charioteer of the Sun God. Vinata wept for Arun. She blamed herself for her son being crippled. She waited for the next child. Soon her child came out destroying the shell. He was partly a bird partly a man. He had wings and hands both. His nose was like the beak of the birds. His leg from foot to knee was black, his knee to waist was white, the body red and face was golden. He was born with much power. Arun told her mother that her second son would relieve her from servitudes. He was named Garuda. He became friends of men, birds, Yakshas, gandharvas, Gods etc. He was formidable. He was right, just and kind. In every way he excelled the quality of sons of Kadru. He fed on snakes. There is a nice story about him in the Ramayana. Ram and Laxman were fighting with Meghnad. The daemon flung the arrow of snakes

called Nagpash. Ram could not resist it. Big snakes bound Ram and Laxman tightly. The ape soldiers got disheartened. Then to save Ram and Laxman from Nagpash, Jambuban requested Ram to call in Garuda. The moment Ram remembered him, a big storm came up. The snakes fled wherever they could. The king of birds Garuda appeared. His very presence freed Ram and Laxman from Nagpash. Seeing his Lord free, Garuda begged permission to go. Garuda is the vahana of Lord Vishnu. In Vishnu temples the figures of Garuda are seen to be half seated at the feet of lord Vishnu. His palms are closed in the gesture of the pronam.

Here in the meantime the two sisters Vinata and Kadru got involved in the bandy of words. They were talking about the holy horse of the king of Gods, Indra. In the course of discussion at one time Vinata said that the horse was white. Kadru being in a mood to quarrel with her sister, said that it was black. The talk changed to an altercation. Kadru proposed that she would serve the other who would get defeated. Vinata agreed. The next day they would plan to see the horse. But at night Kadru came to know that the horse was white and Vinata was correct. A fear grasped her. She would have to serve Vinata. This could never be possible for her. Kadru was not to bow before anybody. What could be done? Kadru fell in deep thought. Suddenly an idea struck her mind. She immediately called in her snake children. They arrived without delay. Kadru told them to cover Indra's horse such that at distance it might look black. The snakes who were black soon covered the horse to make it appear black at distance. The next day as agreed earlier two sisters went to heaven to see

the horse. They were blocked at the gate. Kadru said to Vinata "Sister we need not go inside. Look there. The horse is visible in the stable. It is black". Vinata saw at a distance. Yes the horse was black. She returned home sorry. She had to accept servitudes to Kadru for ever. Vinata wept and served her sister. Kadru did torture of all sorts but Vinata had to bear. In this way thousands of years had passed. Vinata told her son to grow faster so that he could free her from servitudes.

When Garuda was old enough he asked his step mother what she wanted to free his mother. Kadru told him to bring holy nectar from heaven for his brothers. Garuda agreed. He flew towards heaven. The Gods with Indra's leadership tried to protect nectar. They fought with Garuda. Indra threw his vajra but nothing worked against the king of the birds. He snatched the nectar pot and flew back. On the way while crossing Golok he saw Lord Vishnu. The Lord asked him if he would serve Him as vahan (mount). Garuda submissively agreed. The Lord told him not to give his brothers the nectar. As a way to hide nectar from snakes Lord Vishnu told him to cover the pot with straw. Garuda did that. When he brought it near his stepmother she relieved his mother Vinata from servitudes. Then she asked her snake children to lick the covered pot. The snakes did it but alas! They did not get nectar. But their tongues got torn into two halves for the sharpness of straw. Since then it is found that the tongue of the snake is divided into two.

The name Garuda is present in our army in many ways. He is friendly with all.

## **The story of Rishi Parashar, the teller of the Vishnu Purana**

**R**ishi Parashar told the story of creation to his disciples. This story was on Lord Vishnu and later the creation of Lord Brahma.

Rishi was very pious. He was brought up by his grandfather Rishi Vasishtha. Rishi Shakti was Parashar's father and mother was Adrushyanti.

His father and mother both were very religious. Rishi Vasishtha was of course a great sage. He was the Guru of King Dasaratha, the father of Sri Ram Chandra.

Once a Kshatriya king Vishwamitra hoped to be Brahmin. But it was not an easy work. He fixed his mind to do it. He went to a deep forest. There he began Tapasya (penance). At that time if Vasishtha did not take anybody as Brahmin, he would not be Brahmin. Vishwamitra spent long days in Tapasya. He became slim and long bearded. One day he felt he attained brahminhood. But the bar was there. To get acceptance from Vasishtha was a tough task. However Vishwamitra hoped to pass. He collected the best things from many places. He gathered these things for gifts. He hoped Vasishtha would accept him as Brahmin getting the gifts. But alas! Vasishtha was not ready to do wrong. He told Vishwamitra that he was not till a

brahmin. Vishwamitra took it seriously. He was angry with Vasishtha. He wanted to do the harm of Vasistha.

A few days later than this, son of Vasistha, Rishi Shakti was going through the forest where Vishwamitra did Tapasya. Rishi Shakti did not know about the refusal his father did to Vishwamitra. Rishi Shakti was going to a place of worship. Vishwamitra spotted him. He knew that Rishi Shakti was the son of Vasistha. He also knew that Vasistha loved his son very much. At this, a plan came to his mind. He took the form of a rakhsash and attacked Rishi. Rishi could not save himself. He died of the attack of rakhsash. Vasistha was terribly hurt at his son's death. But he still refused to say Vishwamitra a Brahmin. Vishwamitra went for deeper Tapasya. The wife of Rishi Shakti, Aadrushyanti came to her father -in-law Vasistha after her husband's death. Vasistha took care of her. She was carrying a child then. She told Rishi Vasishtha that every now and then she heard the Veda mantras. Vasistha could not believe it at first. But one day he himself heard that someone was singing the Veda mantras in a child's voice within her belly. He understood that some great soul was going to be born. He told Aadrushyanti that her child would be a noble person. He would be a great sage.

After a few days the baby was born. It had bright eyes and a fair complexion. The baby had a charming face. Vasistha was happy to have such a beautiful grandson.

The child was growing up with care. He learnt the Veda at a very tender age. His wisdom at that age would surprise all. The boy was always in deep thought

of Lord Vishnu. He had prayers of the Lord always on lips.

Now the rishi boy is at the age of seven. Every sage in the ashram (hermitage) loved this boy for his simplicity. Everybody loved him for his godliness.

Rishi Vasishtha would love his grandson very much.

One day Vasistha was talking with other sages and Brahmins with his grandson in the lap. They were exchanging views on religion. They were discussing the greatness of Lord Vishnu. Little Parashar also shared his in-depth knowledge about Sri Vishnu. The sages were surprised at his knowledge. In the meantime, there came the great Rishi Markandeya. He was an old saint and reputed for his knowledge and purity. On arriving there he made a pronam to Rishi boy Parashar. All around him were surprised. They said "Rishibar (Oh! the great hermit) Why do you make a pronam to a little boy?" Markandeya said, "Listen, the great sages present here. This boy has been praying to Lord Vishnu since he was still within his mother. I have prayed, if counted strictly, only for five years. A man from the religious point of view should be aged not by years of breathing but by the years of prayers. In this respect I am younger than this holy child. So I showed respect to this great Rishi boy."

Rishi Vasishtha was very pleased at these words. His love for the grandson multiplied a million times.

Rishi Parashar told his disciples that it was a great honour for him.

Later once Rishi Parashar was travelling to a distant place of worship. The place was so distant that it took two days to reach there. So the Rishi stayed in a fishermen's king's hut for a night. Matsogandha the daughter of the King looked after him with much care. Rishi was pleased with her. He felt like rewarding her with a child.

The next morning Matsogandha crossed the river Ganges with the Rishi in her boat. Rishi wanted to give her a male child. Matsogandha asked for a lonely place. Keeping her words Rishi created an island in the river. But Matsogandha did not want the presence of her father on the bank. Rishi understood her mind. He used his godly power to create a mist. At his blessings Matsogandha became Yojongandha. Her hair and body had the smell of lotus. This smell could be felt from many miles. (one yojon). She prayed for the child to be a scholar. Rishi blessed her with this also. The child was dark in complexion. So he was named Krishna. He was born on an island (dwip) so was called dwaipayana. He became a learned saint. He divided the Vedas into four parts. So he is called VedaVyas. He wrote the puranas and the upapuranas

In the Mahabharata Rishi Parashar told Yudhishtira the eldest of the Pandavas that Lord Shiva fulfilled his prayer of a scholar child. So he became the father of Rishi Vyas.

After this Rishi Parashar did not live for long. Of an attack of wolves he died. As a teller of the Vishnu Puran he has become immortal.

## **The story of Madhu Kaitava badh (killing)- the killing of the two daemons**

**A**fter the end of the previous creation, the animals and plants changed to the sea of alcohol. The land went under this liquid. No sign of life was seen there. Soon a bed of snake called Ananta Nag came up floating. This snake had several hoods. It offered a luxurious bed to Lord Vishnu for sleeping. The Lord was in Yog Nidra (deep meditative sleep) on it. So many years had passed. Towards the end of his Yog Nidra, a lotus came up from his navel. Upon the lotus was seated Lord Brahma. He was the creator of the new life.

Soon he was busy in his mission of making the new world. But two asuras (daemons) were born of wax in Vishnu's ears. One of these two demons had a special liking for Madhu (honey). So he was known as Madhu daitya (daemon). The other daitya looked like a very very big keet (insect) so it was known as Kaitava. From the very time of their birth, they were at the killing of Lord Brahma and putting an end to his work. Lord Brahma was alarmed. For life he prayed for the awakening of Lord Vishnu. He knew that only Vishnu could get him rid of these two asuras. But Vishnu was still in sleep. What could be done? Brahma understood that the Devi (goddess) of his Yog Nidra who was a

form of Goddess Durga should have to be prayed and pleased. Brahma started reciting hymns for the goddess. Soon Devi, pleased with Brahma Dev's prayer, came out from Lord Vishnu. Vishnu started war with the asuras. A fierce battle broke out. The battle continued for five thousand years. None could defeat each other. Lord Vishnu was worried to see that the asuras could not be overpowered. He took up a trick. He planned to befool the two daemons. He prayed to Devi Saraswati a noble form of Goddess Durga to make the two asuras nonsense. Devi kept his prayer. The daemons lost their senses and said, "Vishnu, we are pleased with you fighting. We find you are a great warrior. We like to give you a boon. Pray for a boon."The Lord was waiting for this time. He said, "I am happy to get blessings from you. You please give me a boon of being killed at my hands."The two asuras were so outwitted by Devi Saraswati that they said,"Tathastu". (Let it be so). But they put one condition. They said," We will die at your hands but in a dry place. Where there is no liquid, there we will die."

Lord Vishnu created a mountain and advised Lord Brahma to hold it above karan salil (alcoholic liquid). Brahma did this. Lord Vishnu took the asuras above the mountain and forced them to lie on his thigh. Then he cut their heads with his weapon Sudarshan Chakra.

The huge fat of the asuras were used for making new earth. The fat is called Medh and the earth was made from this medh so its other name is Medini. In the above way the asuras were killed by Sri Vishnu.

## **The story of Mahishasura badh and the glory of Ma Durga**

Once there was a king named Suratha in Bengal. Somebody says that he was the king of Kalinga. Whatever his kingdom was, the king Suratha was a very good king. In his kingdom the people were very happy. The king was noble and gracious. He was kind-hearted to all. His principles were controlling the bads and favouring the good. Even this King contracted bad luck. His enemies occupied his land. His ministers betrayed him. It was not that he had no strength or power. But who could fight with the fate? The king lost his country. He took shelter in the deep forest. There he sat under a tree and was thinking about his land and people.

He felt sorry for the country and his country's men. Soon he caught sleep. The day turned to twilight. The king derived pleasure from his sleep. Suddenly he heard someone's voice. Somebody said, "Maharaj, here you are! What you are here for!" The king, on waking up, saw Samadhi Vaishya before him. The king stood up. He told Vaishya his past story. He was bound to come to the forest. The king asked about Vaishya. Then Samadhi said, "Rajan I have lost all my fortune at the betrayal of my son and wife. They have made me a beggar. And not only that. They planned to take my life also. I somehow managed to come to this forest and hide myself. My misery has no bounds."

The king said, " Both of us are the victims of hard luck."

They were seated under a tree and kept silent for some time.

Soon they heard the prayer of Veda mantras from the nearness. They were surprised. Who could sing so deeply the mantras (hymns)? Their minds were filled with awe and pleasure. The king said, " Let us follow this chant. I am taking to this mantra" Samadhi Vaishya said, " Me too, Rajan."

These two wretched men walked towards the source of the chanting of the mantras. After a few minutes of walk they arrived at the cottage of a sage. They saw the sage was preparing for sacrificial fire in the evening. The king and the Vaishya made pronam (salutations)to the Rishi. Rishi advised them to sit, gave them fruits to eat, and asked what they had come for.

They told their stories. They also wanted a remedy. Seeing their sorrow the Rishi Medhas to whose hermitage they went, told them the allegory of Ma Mahamaya (goddess of illusion). The Goddess is always present and still appears when the bad overpowers the good. She has different forms, generally ten in numbers. These ten forms are, kali, tara, shoroshi, bhubaneswari, bairavi, chhinnamasta, dhumavati, bagala, matangi, and kamala. Devi is known to be Adishakti the oldest form of power. At her grace man can do marvel.

The king and the Vaishya wanted to listen more about the Devi.

Rishi Medhas said, "Devi is more known as Durga. In this form she has ten hands. In each hand she holds a weapon. Her vahana is a lion. Devi kills a daemon king Mahishasura. Here Devi Durga is the symbol of good and Mahishasura of extreme bad. Bad can't rule for long. Good overpowers it at the end". Rishi Medhas told them, "King before I tell you about Devi Durga, listen a little about Mahishasura who occupied heaven and tortured the Gods and in the long run had to submit to Devi Durga.

Once the Asura Raj Rambhasura went to the deep forest for Tapasya. He was ready to put strong prayer for Lord Shiva. He wished to have an all square child. His strength of prayers pleased the Lord. He gave him the boon that the Asura Raj wanted. Raja was happily returning.

On his way back to home, the Asura king came across an asura girl. She was worshipping the Lord Shiva after finishing her bath in the river. She was a beautiful lady. Looking her, Rambhasura wanted to marry her. Mahishi the Asura lady told that she could not marry because on marriage she would get the form of a buffalo. If the King accepted this she would marry him. The Asura king took her to his mother Diti. She was told by guru Sukracharya that Mahishi would give birth to an all powerful boy who would dominate Swarga (heaven) Martya (earth) and Patal (nether world). At mother's direction Rambhasura married Mahishi. Mahishi changed into a buffalo. At this the Gods laughed at Rambhasura. He gave a son to Mahishi and fought with the Gods. The Asura king was killed in the fight. Mahishi also sacrificed herself on his cremetorial fire. The child to Mahishi was named

Mahishasura. He was angry with the killers of his father. To defeat Gods in fight Mahishasura went into the deep forest. There he prayed Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma was pleased with Mahishasura. Mahishasura wanted immortality. But Brahmadev blessed him with the boon of not being defeated by males. Mahishasura was not fearful of females and animals. He thought he was near to immortal. He was also blessed with ability to change form. Now the daitya king attacked heaven. The Gods had to accept defeat. The Asura king Mahishasura occupied the heaven.

In the meantime Mahishasura falsified with Rishi Katyayana and was cursed to be killed by a lady.

The Gods were tortured by him. They went to Golok and met with Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva who were there at that time. They listened to the sorrows of the Gods. Then beams of fire came out from their third eyes. A big fire ball came to be. The fire transformed into a goddess. She had ten hands. Her face was rosy, eyes black, lips pink and palms red. She roared like a thunder. The different Gods presented her their various weapons. Preparing her for fighting with Mahishasura the Gods requested her to proceed.

Devi was given a lion by Himavan as vahana (mount). Devi sounded conch and called in Mahishasura for fighting. Soon the Asura king appeared in the form of buffalo. A fierce battle set in. The Asura king changed his forms every time. Devi Durga defeated the king. She pressed him under her feet and pierced him with Trishul (three pronged weapon) given by Lord Shiva.

The Gods were happy to see the Asura king die. Since then she is known as Mahishasuramardini. This Devi is Adyashakti Mahamaya. Her pleasure is the source of the riches, fortune, convalescence, and deaths of enemies.

Rishi Medhas told the King Suratha and the Vaishya to please Devi Durga for overcoming the fate.

King Suratha started worshipping this Devi in the spring time in the name of Basanti puja. Lord Ram began the tradition of Durga Puja in the autumn. This puja (worship) since then is also known as Sharodia Utsav. (Autumnal festival).

## **The story of Lord Ganesha, the beloved son of the Lord Shiva and Devi Parvati**

**L**ord Ganesha is the son of Lord Shiva and Devi Parvati. Lord Ganesha gives success in work. The men and the Gods pray at him success in any of their attempts. Lord Ganesha has a short figure, three eyes, four hands and he has the head of an elephant. His vahana (mount) is a rat. He carries conch, chakra, mace and lotus flower in his four hands.

Once Prajapati Daksha performed a yajna without inviting Lord Shiva. There in the place of worship Lord Shiva was badly criticized. Sati, the wife of Shiva and daughter of Daksha could not bear her husband's bad names. Daksha was angry with Shiva. It is said that Shiva once looked down upon Daksha without showing him honour. As a revenge Daksha did not invite Shiva in his yajna and puja celebration. Sati jumped into fire of sacrifice and laid down her life.

This made Shiva terribly unhappy and he put the celebration into a mess. Then he sat in a deep meditation. Meanwhile Sati was again born as daughter of the king of mountains the Himavan. Her mother was Menaka. She was named Parvati, the daughter of Parvat Himalayas. Parvati the other form of Devi Durga was fond of Lord Shiva. She worshiped Lord Shiva in the mountains. Shiva blessed her and married.

But many years passed. They had no child. Parvati was upset at it. She did so many rituals but to no avail. Only one ritual was left. Parvati performed this Punyak vrata (celebration). The performance of this vrata pleased Lord Vishnu. At the blessing of lord Vishnu Parvati had a child. This child was given the name Ganesha. The birth of the child was spread. Hearing the beauty of the newly born son of Shiva and Parvati, all the Gods came to visit the boy except the king of planets Shani. Shani Maharaj was once cursed by his wife the daughter of Chitrarath that he would have evil effects in looking at anybody. So he did not come. But Parvati did not accept it and forced her brother Shani to look at the baby. The moment he saw the child, it lost its head. At this Parvati broke into tears. To calm down her Lord Shiva at the advice from Vishnu went out to collect the head. It was said that the head of the man or animal that lay with the head north wards should have to be collected. None other than an elephant white in colour was lying like that. Shiva cut its head and Vishnu put it in Ganesha's neck. Ganesha got back to life. To make him forget this elephant head the Gods spread that in puja of any sort the worship of the Lord Ganesha must be done first. Since then in every religious performance Ganesh puja is performed at the very beginning.

It is found in Skanda Purana that once Parvati was carrying Ganesha eight months old. At that time Sindur danava (daemon) entered her belly and cut off the baby's head. The headless child was born. At the advice of Saint Narada the child cut the head of Elephant like daitya Gajasur and set it in his neck.

Since then one of his names is Gajanan the face like an elephant.

Somewhere it is told that the figure of Ganesh was made by Devi Parvati with the dirt from her hands. This was a headless figure. Lord Shiva put an elephant head on the neck of this doll and set life in it. Being alive this child worshiped Shiva and Parvati. In return Shiva made him leader of Gana or common men and he came to be known as Ganapati. Lord Ganesha is thought to remove obstacles and bless with success.

He was prayed by Tulsi for marriage but Ganesha refused. He cursed her to be wife of a daemon. Tulsi cursed him to marry Pusti even though Ganesha preferred a bachelor life.

There is a story about Ganesha's having only one tooth. The story is told in Brahma vaibarta purana.

One day Rishi Parashuram came to Kailash to meet with Shiva and Parvati. But then they were sleeping. In the door Lord Ganesha was in duty to let them rest peacefully. He did not allow Parashuram enter the room. This might disturb their sleep. Parasuram took in this a serious offence and wanted to forcefully break through. Ganesha put up a bar. A battle broke out. Nobody defeated each other. Only Ganesha's tooth partly broke at the hitting of Parasuram's axe. Since then Pravu Ganesha is called Ekadanta (one tooth).

Somewhere else in Brahma vaibarta purana it is told that once Lord Surya was about to kill Mali and Sumali two devotees of Lord Shiva. To save them from Surya Lord Shiva hit the God of the day with Trishul.

Lord Surya lost sense at it and fainted. The world was dark. A hue and cry came up there. The father of Surya cursed Shiva with his son's being headless. To this Ganesha lost head. Then Ganesha's life was saved by putting head of Indra's elephant Oiravat in Ganesha's neck.

This is believed that in business a bumper profit is possible with Ganapati Bappa's blessings.

## **The story of Lord Kartikeya, the General of the Gods.**

**I**t was a common thing that the daityas and danavas (daemons) would win in a fight with the Gods. There were generals to the daityas. But the Gods had no general.

The king of the Gods Indra felt the want of a powerful general on his side. So he was in search of such a leading fighter. He went to Lord Brahma for directions. The Lord said to him, "Look, the son of Lord Shiva will take charge of the General of the Gods." He said, "Tarakasur that is giving troubles to you, can only be killed by the son of Lord Shiva. So arrange for Provu Shiva's marriage."

Debraj Indra said, "Vagoban how can it be possible? Lord is in deep meditation after His wife Sati's death. He who wil go to call Him will be fired to ashes." Lord Brahma said, "Don't worry about this. Devi Sati is again born as the daughter of King Himavan. Her name is Parvati. She likes Shiva. On marriage of the Lord Shiva with Parvati your dream will come true. Try to make this marriage possible."

Indra was puzzled to find a way out. He asked "Provu you tell us how to proceed."

Brahma replied, "Ask Parvati to make strong prayers of Lord Shiva in the mountains of the

Himalayas and tell the Madan dev (God of marriage) to play his trick from a secret place."

Indra was happy with the advice and told Parvati to go to the mountains for prayers. Parvati went to the Himalayas and started worshipping. In the mean time Madan dev had flung arrow to Shiva to grow the wish of marriage in him. Shiva's meditation broke and He saw Parvati praying to please Him. Shiva blessed her and married.

Once in the nearity of Manas hill Indra heard the cry of a lady. He rushed there to see if someone was in danger. He saw a danava (daemon) named Keshi to take away Devsena the daughter of Daksha Prajapati for killing. Indra managed to save her and took her to Lord Brahma. Brahma said that the God who would marry this girl would save the heaven from Tarakasura.

The Brahma vaibarta purana tells that after marriage with Parvati, Lord Shiva created a son out from His fiery Tejas (power). Actually what happened, Shiva was travelling with Parvati on Kailash parvat. Suddenly His Tejas (power of creation) appeared. He sent it to the earth. The earth could not bear the Tejas and gave it to Agni, the fire God. The fire God feared to hold that Tejas and put it in the marshy jungle. A nice male child took birth there. The six wives of six sages except of the rishi Vasistha, called Kritika collectively, loved the child and fed it. They brought him up also. Learning this, Parvati went there to meet Kritika and fetch her son back to Kailasha. This little child was grown up by Kritika so he was named Kartikeya. This son took the charge of the General of

the Gods. He defeated indomitable Tarakasura and saved heaven.

Another story of Kartikeya goes like this.

One of the daughters of Daksha Prajapati, Swaha wanted to marry the fire God Agni dev. But Agni dev liked the Kritika, the good looking wives of saptarshi sages. Knowing this Swaha took the form of those women one by one and pleased Agni dev. Every time she assumed the figure of a bird after meeting with Agni and put his power in a golden fire pit. She could not take the form of Arundhati. Arundhati had a lot of meditation and power of mind.

Swaha took six forms so the child who was born in the golden pit had six heads but rest parts were like other children. This child was named Skanda or Kartikeya.

Once Kartikeya had a fight with Indra when Indra flang Vajra his weapon. At this a glowing young God named Bishakh appeared from Kartikeya's right side. This frightened Indra and he accepted Karthik as the Gods' general. Kartikeya is sometimes called Sath- anan i.e. six heads.

At the blessings of Kartikeya the childless person gets a child. It is a common belief.

## **The story of the goddess Devi Laxmi, the goddess of the resources and the beauty.**

**F**rom the very beginning of Durga Puja, goddess Laxmi is found on the right side of Devi Durga. She wears a red coloured muslin saree and carries a gold box full of resources and a few sheafs of paddy. The sheaf of paddy is the symbol of the wealth.

Devi Laxmi is also the symbol of the good and the beauty.

In Vaikuntha she lives with Lord Vishnu. She is his wife. She is commonly thought to be the daughter of Lord Shiva and Devi Durga. But in Purana it is said that she is the daughter of Maharshi Vrigu and his wife Khyati the daughter of King Daksha Prajapati.

She doesn't stay in anybody's house hold steadily. She cannot bear boasts. Those who are boastful of pelf are punished by her.

Here goes a nice story of her punishing a rich trader with badluck.

Once on a day of Holi, the day of playing with colours, Devi was sitting with God Narayan in a heavenly garden and talking softly. Soon there came the sage Narada with Veena. He said to Devi Laxmi "Ma why are you so rude to the common men on the earth. They are living in hardships". Devi looked up to

the Lord and begged his advice. Narayan smiled and told her to go down to the earth and see what happened. He forbade her to be unjust with anybody. Devi promised as He wanted.

Devi came to Avanti city in Bharat varsha. It was noon time. The citizens were preparing for a bath. Somebody had finished bathing. They were returning home uttering mantras. A few beggars were begging. An ailing man was restless on the road. Nobody was by his side. Devi in the guise of a poor lady moved on. The city had a little prosperity. Most of the people were in acute misery. Devi soon came across a palace-like building where a puja celebration was going on. Devi asked what was the puja (worship), why were all of the members of the family out to perform this? Were there any gains in doing the puja?

The oldest of the ladies said " Ma, you sit here. This is Laxmi puja. Today is Thursday. If the married women pray every Thursday the wealth and prosperity from Devi, they are blessed with those riches. Devi blesses with happiness and success. So we are praying for Devi."

Devi Laxmi smiled. Soon there came seven brothers who were the sons of Dhanapati the merchant. They told the ladies that none could separate themselves. Their brotherly bondage was too strong to tear. Their wealth could hardly lower down. They were boasting like these. Devi silently heard all their words. That night she left Dhanapati's house. Dhanapati died at this. Hardly a fortnight passed that a severe quarrel came up among the brothers. They soon separated. Their mother the widow of Dhanapati left home and

went to the forest. She tried to commit suicide. But Devi Laxmi told her that she should return home and perform Laxmi puja with all the daughter -in-laws and her family would be as before.

Devi promised to stay in her family. Dhanapati's wife came back home and along with sons, daughter- in-laws and grand children worshiped the Devi. Their wealth and harmony again returned by Her kindness.

When the puja celebration was running a woman came there. Her husband was unable to do work. They lived on begging. The woman asked about the celebration. The old lady told her that it was Laxmi puja. Whoever did this puja, would not have any want. The woman performed this puja in her home within her capacity. Her husband was able to do work. Their sweet home was filled with joy and the riches. And the couple was blessed with a nice baby. Devi smiled upon them.

The other day a merchant said to his wife" Why are you praying for Laxmi Devi? If anybody has nothing in the luck he would get nothing. No Devi is there to give him pelf. Look at me. I am fortunate enough to get this wealth; your Laxmi would do nothing. She has no power."

His wife wept and begged mercy from Devi. The merchant set out for business. His seven merchant vessels were out on the calm sea. But in the middle of the sea a terrible storm came up with big waves. The vessels drowned and the merchant somehow managed to save him. He became a penniless beggar. In unknown land he begged from door to door and understood the cause of misfortune. He prayed for Devi Laxmi's mercy. Devi heard his prayer. She returned his power and pelf.

The merchant spread her puja celebration all over the country. Then nobody in Bharat varsha remained unfed unslept uncared for.

Another allegory runs like this...

The daughter of Devi Laxmi was Dhusna. Son was Kuber. Dhusna was a queen. She had a prosperous life. Oneday Devi Laxmi sent her son to her daughter to remind her of Laxmi puja. It was Thursday. Kuber told her sister to perform puja. But Dhusna told him that she did not maintain fast and was unable to do puja. Kuber said this to his mother Devi Laxmi. The next Thursday the reply from Dhusna was the same. Devi was a little annoyed. But bore this patiently. Third time Dhusna was combing hair when Kuber came. He told of puja. Dhusna lost patience and threw comb to Kuber. It struck on his forehead and an injury was made there. Kuber was alarmed at his sister's act. He knew his mother would be angry with Dhusna and curse her.

Kuber came back with heavy mind. At noon Devi noticed that injury. She asked how was it done? Kuber made weak trial to hide reason but truth was easily reached by Devi. She cursed Dusna, said," your gold ornaments will be of iron, you will fall eyesore to the king."

So was the fate of Dhusna. The king ordered his men to throw her out of palace. Dhusna went to the forest. There came Lord Narayan to bathe in royal pond. He heard of her sorrow. He advised her to pray for Laxmi. Dhusna did this. Lord Narayan asked Devi Laxmi as to who was crying in the forest? Laxmi told every thing. Lord showed a little anger with Devi and

advised to forgive Dhusna. He promised to have Dhusna perform Laxmi vrata on each Thursday.

Laxmi forgave Dhusna. Her ornaments were changed back to gold. The King accepted his queen with affection. The Greatness of Laxmi puja spread over the land.

Once the rishi Durvasa cursed Laxmi go under the sea. The heaven lost glory and beauty. At the same time king Prithu told the gods to churn the sea to have Laxmi and holy nectar.

The Gods with the daemons churned the khsir sagar with Mondar Mountain. The rope was Vasuki snake. On the rigorous churning, came up Laxmi with Amrit kalash (pot of nectar). There came up horse, elephant, honey, alcohol, Som, and Dhanwantari the best physician. Lastly there appeared venom. Lord Shiva drank this venom and saved the creation from death. Lord Vishnu got Laxmi back to Him.

There came back glory and beauty to the heaven.

All this was possible with return of Sri ie Devi Laxmi.

## **The stories of Vahanas (mounts) of some Gods as in the mythological scripts.**

**T**hat day Lord Indra was enjoying the dance of Gandharvas. Among them was a good looking gandharva Krouncha. He served a nice performance.

All the Gods were enjoying his presentation. Indra the king of the Gods praised him. The performance was going on nicely. Suddenly Krouncha trod the feet of Lord Brahma. He did this unknowingly. But Brahmadev was angry with him. Krouncha begged mercy. But Brahmadev did not show that. He cursed him. At this Krouncha became a mountain high rat. His living place was the earth. Krouncha was angry with the Brahmins. He thought the Brahmins were at the root of his fate. However his bad luck drove him to the world from heaven. There in the earth he did harm to the saints and Brahmins. He ate up corn in their fields. He cut the robes (red dresses of the rishis) of the holy persons.

The holy and the common people were terribly disturbed.

In the meantime the big rat reached Rishi Parashar's ashram (hut of saints) and put everything in a mess. The Lord of success God Ganesha was present in the hut. Rishi Parashar prayed for His kindness to

rid the ashramiks (the residents of the hut) of these troubles.

Ganesha the Vagoban alerted the rat to keep from harming the sages. But the creature hardly paid any heed to the caution. Angry with this, Lord Ganesha started a battle with it. The rat put up a strong resistance. The battle continued for several years.

In the long run the rat was defeated. Lord Ganesha punished the rat by making it his vahana.

Somewhere it is said that Gajamukh Asura once became very powerful. It caused a lot of harm to the Rishis and the Brahmins. Everybody on earth was disturbed by the Asura. Lord Shiva was reported of this trouble. Lord asked Ganapati dev to punish the Asura. Lord Ganesha moved against Gajamukh danava. After a fierce battle Gajamukh took the form of a gigantic mouse. He put Lord Ganesha in an awkward situation by hiding in the mountain holes. But Ganesha made him submit and bade to become vahana. Gajamukh prayed for mercy. At Ganesha 's blessings he (vahana mouse) is also worshipped during worship of the Lord Ganesha.

The vahana of Lord Shiva is an Ox. He is named Nandi. Nandi was initially a rishi boy. He was a foster child of Rishi Shilad. Rishi got him while tiling the field of yajna (sacrificial fire). He brought the child up in his hermitage. Nandi was the most devoted to Lord Shiva among His devotees. To test the devotion of Nandi Lord Shiva sent Mitra and Varuna to the hermitage. They told Silad that the child was having short life. He asked Nandi to pray Lord Shiva deeply. At the time of his death, Yamaha came to take him. But Lord Shiva

appeared there and took Nandi to Shivlok. Nandi is found in the Shiva temple in the form of an ox. He sits on the right side of Lord Shiva. He looks up to the Lord's holy face. It's believed that if something is whispered in Nandi 's ear, the message goes to Lord Shiva directly.

Devi Durga has Lion as vahana. The Lion is the king of beasts. The Lion shows the power of Devi Durga. The Himalayas gave Lion as Devi's mount. At that time Devi was preparing for the killing of Mahishasura. The Gods were giving her their weapons. The Lion became indomitable in the battle with the Asura. When Mahishasura took the form of buffalo, the Lion killed the buffalo and Devi killed the Asura.

Lord Kartikeya had the mount peacock. The bird is the king of birds in our land. Kartikeya was also the General of the Gods. In the rain the peacock opens up its feathers and looks beautiful. Similarly Kartikeya when dressed for war, looks beautiful. This bird takes Kartikeya from place to place quickly in the battlefield so it is liked by the General. The bird has sharp eye sight. The General of the Gods also has sharp sights. So in every respect the peacock is the best vahana of Lord Kartikeya.

Devi Saraswati has her vahana the Swan. Devi likes white and so the Swan is white. The white colour stands for purity. The dress of Devi Saraswati is white. Her complexion is bright. It is believed that Swan draws milk from the water and milk mixture. It is the symbol of supreme knowledge. When a man receives true knowledge he can differentiate real truth from a mixture of good and bad. This is the sign of Devi. She

blesses with this knowledge. So her vahana is a Swan. It is a fact that a swan can take its food from the dirty water of the pond. This quality of her mount gives a symbol of capabilities to choose the good from bad. This is also taught by Devi Saraswati.

Devi Laxmi has an owl as vahana. The owl moves in the darkness. Devi Laxmi also comes to households at night. She is the Goddess of wealth. She gives crops. An owl saves this crop from rats, and insects. In rural societies of our country owls are believed to fetch fortune. Devi Laxmi is the goddess of fortune. So the owl is her mount.

The Goddess of remedy for cholera small- pox ecxima is Devi Sheetala. Her vahana is a donkey. The donkey is resistant to diseases. It is strong and diligent. It doesn't fall easy prey of illness. So Devi chooses the donkey as her mount.

Lord Vishnu has as the vahana the king of birds, Garuda. Once Garuda, the half bird & half man went to snatch holy nectar from heaven. There he was resisted by the gods. Indra threw Vajra his weapon to Garuda. Garuda threw a feather against Vajra in the honour of Lord Indra. Nobody in heaven could do anything to him. While coming from heaven he met with Lord Vishnu. Vishnu was pleased with his restraint of greed. He won nectar but himself did not take even a drop. At this Vishnu told him to pray for two boons. Garuda wanted his mother to be free from bondage. And wanted for himself the immortality without nectar. The Lord gave him these two boons. Seeing Lord Vishnu's greatness Garuda prayed for him to want anything

from Garuda. Vishnu wanted Garuda as his vahana. Garuda gladly accepted the offer.

The Vahanas are the symbols of their masters.