

BEDTIME STORIES



BY YOGI MAHAJAN

Bedtime Stories is an initiative of

Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi Creative Blessings Trust

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DEDICATED TO THE INNATE INNOCENCE, CHASTITY,
LOVE AND AUSPICIOUSNESS IN ALL CHILDREN

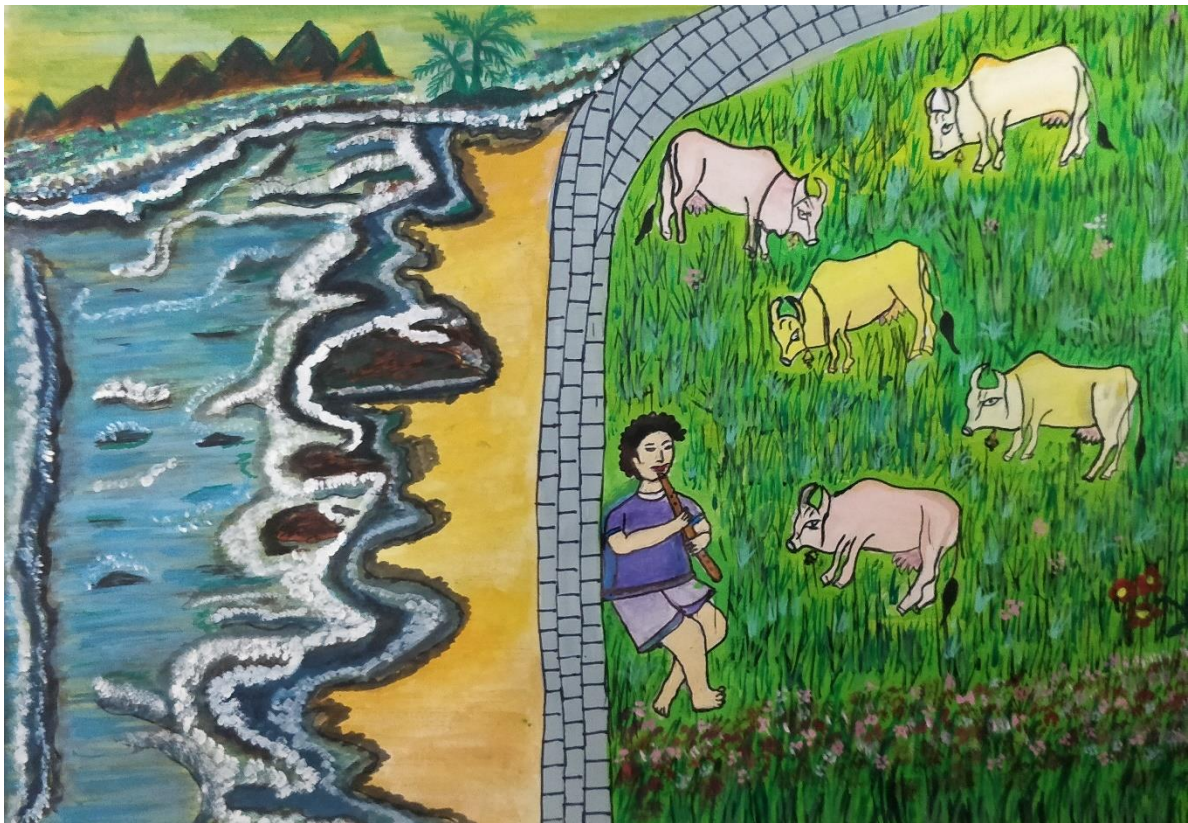
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Chapter 1 - Hansel the Brave

Holland is a country famous for its cheese and Tulips. Hansel lived with his parents in their dairy farm in a village by the coast. Their village was below the sea level. The villagers had built a strong wall along the sea shore to stop the sea water from flooding their land.



Hansel helped his parents by grazing the cows in the meadows. Some days the cows gave more milk and some days they gave less. His mother could not understand the reason, and thought maybe they did not graze enough. But that was not the reason.

While the cows grazed, Hansel would sit against the sea wall and listen to the music of the sea. He learnt to play his flute in rhythm with the waves. The cows enjoyed his flute so much that they would go in a happy mode and give more milk. But some days when the sea was quiet, he did not hear the rhythm

of the waves so he did not play the flute. The cows would go in a sad mode and give less milk.

One day Hansel found it very hard to keep in rhythm with the waves. He wondered why. Then he listened more intently and found the waves were out of rhythm because they dashed harshly against the wall. It never happened before. Hmm, that means the Sea God is angry.

Dark clouds appeared from nowhere and covered the sky. A storm brewed. He had to get the cows home. But before he could move, suddenly, he felt water running down from the wall. He was alarmed, and examined the wall carefully.

“Gosh! There is a leak in the wall, and the sea water is dripping in.”

He thought, “what should I do? I have no tool to stop the leak.”

“But if the leak is not stopped, the sea would drown the whole village.”

He remembered how Shri Hanumana had lifted the mountain of herbs on his hands and brought it to save the life of Shri Laxmana. So, he put his hands against the leak to stop it. It was getting dark and he started to shiver from the cold water drenching his body. He kept praying to Shri Hanuman to give him more strength. Shri Hanumana kept giving him vibrations to keep his hand on the leak.

When he did not return home, his parents got worried. Together with the villagers they set out to search for him.

They found the cows looking miserable in the meadows, but no sign of Hansel. Of course, the cows knew Hansel’s whereabouts but they could not speak. So instead of walking in the direction of their home they started walking in the opposite direction towards him. The villagers followed the cows and Lo! there was Hansel clinging to the wall.

“But why is he clinging to the wall?”

In the dark they could not see that his hand was stuck inside the crack to stop the water.

As they got close to him, he told them what had happened, and then fainted from exhaustion. The villagers immediately fixed the leak and carried him home.

The next day the news of his bravery spread. The king of Holland too heard of the little boy who risked his life to save his village. The King was anxious to meet Hansel and invited him to his palace.

Hansel's family was poor and did not have proper clothes to be presented before the king. One villager had bought a warm blue coat for his son's birthday, and offered it to Hansel. Another had a bought cloth for his trouser, and his wife stitched a pair of pants for Hansel. Another had got a red scarf last Christmas from his grandmother and gave it to Hansel. With the new clothes collectively put together by the villagers his parents escorted him to the King's court?

They humbly bowed before the king.

The king warmly embraced Hansel like his own son, and said, "I am very proud of your bravery, and may all the children of my country learn to be brave like you. I would like to give you a reward. Ask what you would like as a reward."

Hansel humbly replied, "I only did what any son would do to save his Mother land. When you do something out of love for your Mother, the Love of the Mother for her son is the greatest reward. And that's how Shri Adi Shakti loves Shri Ganesha, and Shri Ganesha loves her – there is no reward greater than her love."

The king was very pleased with Hansel's words, and also that he was not greedy as he did not ask anything for himself. As a reward he built a beautiful temple of Shri Ganesha in Hansel's village so people may remember to love their country like their mother. Also, that they may ever be obedient and respectful to their Mother who has given them birth.

Chapter 2 - They Made It in The Heart

Sahaja school Dharamsala is actually a place for serious studies. But there is also plenty of time to play and chill out. The bigger boys love soccer. It is a rough game. Often, they get kicked on the knee, but they don't mind - it's part of the game. What makes it fun is the team work. It is one family - that helps each other, cares for each other, protects each other and loves each other.



The juniors play softer games – hide & seek, race around or just chill out on roller skates. One time the juniors were invited by the Sacred Hearts school for a sports competition. Sacred Hearts is located in the lower region of

Dharamsala. Children from other schools also participated in a hundred metre race. As the referee blew the whistle the children started the race. The parents cheered their children on, “Come on, come on, get ahead of others, faster – faster, yes, you can do it...”

Each child wanted to rise in the eyes of his/her parents and stretched their limits to get ahead of others. A 7-year-old Sacred Hearts girl was desperately trying to keep ahead of others, and it seemed she was going to win. But suddenly she tripped and fell.



She cried for help but the other kids did stop for her – to win the race was more important. But when the Sahaja Yogi kids saw her, they stopped to help her. The girl could not get up because she had sprained her knee. The right-sided parents were pre occupied cheering their kids, and did not bother about the hurt girl.

The Sahaja kids wiped her tears, “Don’t cry, you will be fine.”

“But every time I try to move it hurts, it hurts a lot” she wailed.

“Don’t worry, you will be able to move,” they comforted her.

They prayed to Shri Mataji and raised her kundalini. Then they gave vibrations to her knee. Her vibrations were very hot because she was very right-sided. They understood that competition makes a person right-sided. So, they said the mantra of Shri Chandrama to cool her right side. As they brought down the vibrations from the left to the right side, her vibrations became cool, and the pain became less. Gradually her muscles relaxed, and she stood up.

They helped her to get on her feet, and supported her to the changing room.

The Principal of Sacred Hearts witnessed the accident from a distance -how the Sahaja Yogi kids pulled out of the race to help the poor girl, and treated her. When the winner of the race was announced, the Principal declared Sahaja School as the winning team.

All the parents were surprised and protested, “How can that be, we saw them pull out of the race mid-way with our own eyes.”

The Principal smiled, “You are right. They pulled out of the race mid-way, but they won the race of kindness in their sacred heart. The other kids rushed past the fallen girl to win the race, and did not stop to help the poor fallen girl. The Sahaja kids could have done the same, but they stopped to help her even though they did not know her. Their compassion for the fallen girl was more important than winning the race. The name of our school is Sacred Hearts. So, the object of the school is to build and respect the sacredness of the heart. What is the most sacred thing in the heart? It is love, kindness, caring for the helpless. It does not matter if they did not make it on the race track, they made it in the heart. Thus, in the name of the Sacred Heart, I declare them the winners.”

The Principal invited the Sahaja children for a special treat. But the children declined, “We have learnt how to respect the sacredness of the heart from our teachers. They taught us that we have to reach out to others because if in us something is dying, it means something is feeling in us. That feeling in us is a part of the whole. Once we put our heart to it, the whole thing starts working because the force is coming from our heart.” Thus, we respect the heart because our Spirit shines in it. She is the source of love and gives us joy. We really don’t need any other treat. Actually, our teachers who have taught us deserve the treat.”

The Principal was very pleased with the humility of the children – they did not take the credit for their good deed but gave it to their teachers. She ordered a whole ice cream van to be sent to the school for all the teachers and the children of the Sahaja School!

The ice cream van arrived in the school with all the flavours - banana split, orange glow, fig chunks, blueberry & raspberry, wild berries, ice cream soda, mango bar, pistachio, burnt almonds, praline, vanilla, chocolate and of course strawberry! For once, the children were allowed to skip the usual dinner and have their fill of an ice cream dinner instead. It sure felt like Christmas!

Chapter 3 - A friend in need is a friend indeed

Rajesh and Suresh were good friends. They hung out together, fishing, hang gliding and rafting. After the monsoons are over, the sky becomes clear. So, they went trekking in the snowy Dhauladhar mountains above Dharamsala. As it takes three days to cross the Dhauladhar's glacier their mothers stuffed parathas, bananas and boiled eggs for the trek. Bananas are very nourishing

and provide a great source of energy.



They left early morning, and made it to the base of the snow line before dark. There is no shelter in the glacier except some caves used by migrating shepherds. Luckily, they spotted a safe cave for the night. They lit a fire to ward off bears and snow leopards. After dinner they cuddled into their cosy sleeping bags and rested their tired limbs.

In the morning the sun was already up by the time they woke up. Hurriedly, they packed their belongings and headed towards the big glacier. The Glacier is

named after the Pandava hero Bhim. It is believed that in the evening of their lives the Pandavas crossed this glacier on their way to heaven. But Bhim lost his grip and slipped. It is said he did not make it to heaven because he still

had anger in him. To reach heaven one must overcome anger, fear, greed and jealousy. Only the eldest brother Yudhishter succeeded in reaching heaven because he always spoke the truth.

Rajesh and Suresh had no experience of trekking in snow. Without snow shoes, Sudhir had a hard time crossing the span of the glacier. Suddenly, they heard a rumbling of rocks behind them. As they turned around, they spotted a bear approaching them. Rajesh was swift on his feet and climbed a nearby tree, leaving poor Suresh behind.



Suresh was an ardent devotee of the Goddess. He remembered it was the 8th Navaratra where the Goddess bestows special blessings upon her devotees. As the bear closed on Suresh, he closed his eyes and Prayed to the daughter of the Himalayas, Shri Shailaputri to save him. Shri Adi Shakti had come on earth nine times, but her first incarnation was as the daughter of Himavat, the king of the Himalayas. Shri Shailaputri loves children who are innocent and worship her with a lot of devotion. She always protects them. As Suresh worshipped the Goddess his heart filled with her joy, and he knew she was protecting him. His Sahasrara opened and suddenly it flashed on him that animals do not touch dead bodies. He felt cool vibrations sing atop his head.

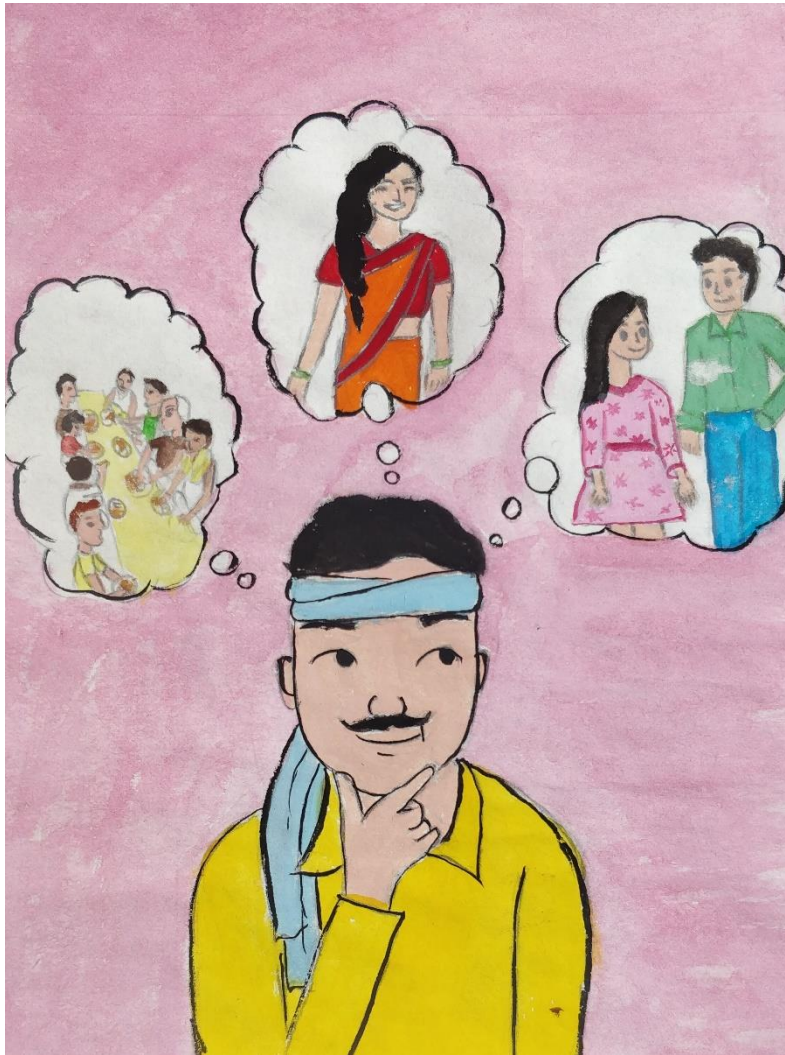
Accordingly, Suresh laid down on the snow, held out his breath and pretend to be dead. The bear sniffed his breathless body, and thinking it to be dead, did not bother to attack him.

Rajesh waited for the bear to disappear, and then climbed down the tree. He enquired, "I saw the bear whisper something in your ear?"

Suresh smiled, “He whispered, a friend in need is a friend indeed. next time keep away from selfish friends like you.”

Chapter 4 - How to Get Around Problems

Did you know that the sweets that we love so much come from sugar cane? Sugar cane is grown in the rich dark sticky soil of Maharashtra. The farmers



sow before the monsoons, and with a little bit of luck if the rains are ample then the crop is also good. Sunder worked very hard day and night, ploughed his fields and planted sugar cane. He was lucky to reap a rich harvest. He knew the crop would fetch a good price. He asked his wife to invite the whole village for Diwali feast. He promised his children new clothes, and his wife a Paithani saree. Of course, there were also house repairs – the roof leaked, the walls needed a fresh coat of plaster, and his cart needed repairs.

In the morning he fed the bullocks well and then loaded his cart. But there was still a lot left. So, he decided to pile it on top. But in doing so he overloaded the cart. With great expectations he set out to sell his crop at the mandi.



After the rains the roads in the villages were slushy. Midway the wheels of Sunder's cart got stuck in the swampy soil. He prodded the bullocks but they could not pull the overloaded cart out of the mud. He got tired and cursed his fate. In desperation he sat down and prayed to God for help.

An old man with a long white beard passed by, and heard the prayers of the distressed Sunder. He said, "My friend, God helps those who help themselves."

Sunder looked up in surprise, "But what

am I to do, I have whipped the bullocks hard but they still can't pull the cart out of the mud."

The old man smiled, "Let us try something else than whipping the bullocks. Let us unload the sugar cane, and then see."

Sunder agreed, and the old man helped him unload the sugar cane. When the cart got empty, it was easy for the bullocks to pull. With hardly any effort they pulled the wheel out of the mud.

Sunder patted the bullocks for the great job they had done, and rewarded them with jaggery.



The old man helped the farmer reload the sugar cane, “You have worked hard and got the reward of a good crop, but you have to have wisdom too. The cart

got stuck because you overloaded it with twice the weight than the bullocks could pull. Now you must divide the load in two trips.”

Sunder agreed.

The old man smiled, “Remember, when things don’t work one way there is always another way to get around the problem.”

“But I am a simple farmer, I don’t know how to get around things.”

The old man replied, “it does not matter if you are a simple farmer or a scholar. God has given everyone the quality of wisdom, but we don’t have access to it unless we meditate.”

Sunder said, “But I say my prayers every day.”

The old man answered, “Of course, it is good to pray, but unless you are wired to God how will he hear your prayers.”

Sunder looked confused, “How do we get wired to God?”

Hmmm, “Your kundalini wires you to God. So, you must get your kundalini awakened.”

Chapter 5 - Treasure Hunt

Viren Koli lived with his parents in a sea side fishing village. With the savings from his modest fishing income he bought a small piece of land and planted a coconut grove. Over the years he saved the income from the coconuts and built a comfortable thatched cottage for his family. He had three children – Nima, Sima and Raju. The village had no school, and the children spent their time on the beach collecting sea shells.

The shells came in all sizes and amazing shapes as though some great artist had delicately crafted them. Their mother taught them to make necklaces and earrings out of them. During puja festivals they sold the shell jewellery to tourists and thus earned their pocket money.

One evening while the children were collecting shells, Nima spotted a bottle floating on the shore. She was curious and decided to swim across to fetch it. She tried to open the bottle but it was tightly sealed. She could tell that it contained something



inside. She carried it safely home and asked her father to open it. As he uncorked it, he was surprised to discovered a piece of paper pop out. It was

dark and he could not read it. The next morning, he took it to the village elder. The words were faded, and the elder could not read them. Then it occurred to him to hold the paper against the table lamp. The words became clear. He scratched his head as though trying to solve some mystery.

Suddenly, his eyes lit up, "You know what? It is a map of a treasure buried on the mountain top." The villagers jumped in excitement, "Wow, a treasure!" The village elder took stock of the situation, "If we want to prepare for the treasure hunt we must gather all the equipment to dig – shovels, spades, spikes etc. If the weather is fine, we could begin digging before sunrise."

As the first rays of the sun penetrated through the coconut grove the villagers climbed the hill and spotted the area of the buried treasure. But they found it hard to dig because a mysterious layer of earth enveloped the chest of treasure. A realized saint from the mountain watched the villagers dig the hard layer of earth but with little progress. He advised, "There is a secret of uncovering the mysterious layer of earth. We are all made of Mother earth, and hence she responds to our inner state. She yields only to those who keep their inner state cool."

The villagers thought they could cool their inner state with water. The water cooled their bodies but how could it reach their inner state? So again, the Mother earth did not yield.

Not before long their shovels hit a layer of ice. They knew that the warmth of fire would melt the hardness of ice. So, they lit a bonfire. Soon it began to warm their cold hearts and brought forth a love so pure that it gave strength to their exhausted bodies. As the ice melted, soft golden rays danced in the atmosphere. Seeing the golden rays, the villagers thought they had reached the treasure. But the golden rays came from some other source. When they looked around, they noticed that each of their hearts contained a golden chest, which emitted the golden rays of joy.

They realized that the hidden treasure had been with them all along in their hearts as their Spirit but because their hearts were frozen, they could not feel it. The realized saint of the mountain smiled: "The Spirit is the font of joy and fills the heart with the treasure of joy. Remember the fishermen disciples of Christ who went out fishing but returned with hollow expression, without any catch. Then Christ appeared before them, and asked them to cast their nets on the other side. And behold they caught a treasure of fish."

In their next fishing trip, they discovered that the Sea God responded to the vibrations of their Spirit. On days when their heart was clean, their Spirit shone, and its light reflected on the ripples. Their cool vibrations pleased the sea God, and he generously opened his chest of treasures. But the days when they quarreled, malice, anger and greed darkened their hearts, their Spirit could not shine. Hence, its light did not reflect on the ripples. Thus, the Sea God was not pleased, and he would not open his treasure chest. They would return home empty handed.



When the Sea God was pleased, he not only opened his treasure chest to the fishermen but also sent his waves to carry gifts of beautiful sea shells to their children.

One day the realized saint of the mountain came down to their village. He was pleased by their cool vibrations and the shine of the Spirit in their eyes. He said, “During the churning of the ocean the Goddess Laxmi appeared out of the ocean. Though the treasure lies buried in the sea bed, she is the one who distributes them, and brings satisfaction to your Nabhi chakra. Hence, the Sea God is your Grandfather. You should seek his permission before entering his ocean.”

The children too learnt to respect their Grandfather. After collecting the treasure of shells, they cleaned the beach of all the plastics and litter people threw in the sea. It was their way of thanking their Grandfather.

The fishermen shared the bounty of their treasure and built a school for their children. The children not only learnt to read and write but also learnt very important skills – wood work, painting, music, cooking and stitching. Thus when they grew up they could be self-employed.

The children studied hard and also learnt the skills that empowered their Swadishthan chakra. Nima learnt cooking. After finishing high school she opened a small café. Her dishes became famous, and brought satisfaction to the Nabhi chakras of everyone. Sima opened a tailoring shop, and with the blessings of her Swadishthan chakra designed beautiful clothes for women. Raju was also blessed by his Swadishthan chakra, and with the skills in wood carving he set up a business. His carvings were so fine that customers from distant towns sent huge orders. Thus, each one discovered his treasure within, and there was no need to hunt it elsewhere. But every day they remembered to clean their hearts of greed, anger and hatred. Thus, their Spirit could always shine, and they could enjoy the treasures bestowed by their chakras too.

Chapter 6 - Vibrating the Clouds

Ravi was the handy kid of the family. He was everywhere - running errands, and at any excuse he loved to run to the market place. The new digital toys displayed in the shop windows fascinated him. He would learn about them from the shop keepers. Though his empty pocket could not buy them, he still played with them in his imagination. Though he did not possess a mobile phone or a laptop, he ran errands for his friends in exchange of time sharing of their digital games. During class hours he sat in the back playing digital games unnoticed by the teacher.

With his attention on gaming how could he pay attention to the lessons? In the tests, he scored the lowest grades. His teachers could not understand why an intelligent child like him should score such low grades.

In the final tests the students who scored the best grades were selected for the prizes. The principal invited Shri Mataji to give the prizes.

Shri Mataji said, "I would like to give a prize not only to the students who stood first but to all the students in the class."

The principal was perplexed, "But how can we give prizes to students who came last."

Shri Mataji smiled, "I am not bothered who is last or first. Christ said the first shall be last. I bless everyone. After their kundalini is awakened you will understand what I am saying."

Thus, Shri Mataji blessed the students and distributed prizes to all of them. It was the first time in his life Ravi received a prize. He was thrilled, and proudly showed it to his parents. It got him thinking, "If Shri Mataji gave me a prize it means I am worthy of it. Next time, I must show her that I am capable of doing much better."

He gave up exchanging his services for digital games, and shifted his seat to the front row. As he started paying attention to the lessons, he was fascinated by the amazing discoveries made by science, health, geography and space. His parents wondered why he had suddenly lost interest in the market place, and had become more interested in his homework.

In the next test he scored 60 out of 100. His teacher was surprised, and thought he had made a calculation error. He rechecked but there was no error. The teacher mused, "The last test he had barely scored 30 out of 100. If he can double his score in one term, maybe with a little help he can triple his grades in the next term."

The teacher started giving him free tuition and advice on reference books. With the teacher's encouragement Ravi blossomed. In the final exam he took everyone by surprise and scored the highest grades.

At the next school annual function Shri Mataji graciously distributed the prizes.

When Ravi's turn came to receive the prize, the Principal said, "Shri Mataji your blessings worked a miracle. This boy always came last in the class but after realization he stood first."

Shri Mataji smiled, "It the miracle of the kundalini."

She asked Ravi, "What would you like to be?"

Ravi replied, "I would like to become an astronaut and go to the moon."

Shri Mataji laughed, "But don't forget to vibrate the clouds, on your way."

Shri Mataji words stayed with Ravi. He asked his teacher, "What did Shri Mataji mean about vibrating the clouds?"

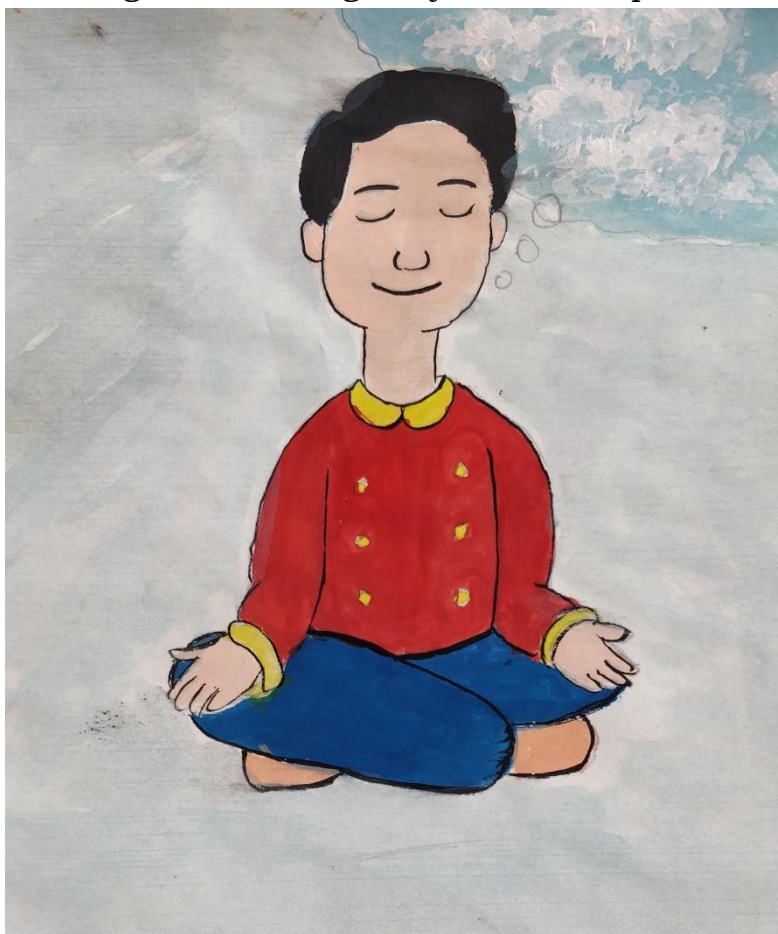


The teacher explained, “if you send vibrations to the clouds, the clouds will get vibrated. The vibrated clouds will send vibrated rain to the earth. The rain that falls on earth will vibrate the soil. Vibrated soil will give more crops, and we will have no food problems anymore.”

Ravi looked puzzled, “how can I send vibrations to the clouds.”

The teacher suggested, “If you start meditating the answer will come.”

Ravi began meditating daily before the photo of Shri Mataji. One morning



as he was meditating it occurred to him that if he could receive cool vibrations from the photograph, the clouds could also receive them from it.

As he observed how TV towers transmitted waves in the ether it gave him an idea. He made a transparency of Shri Mataji photo and transferred it on glass. Next, he mounted the glass on a high voltage lamp and put it atop the tallest building in the neighbourhood. Then he ignited the lamp,

and prayed to Shri Mataji to vibrate the clouds. In the evening it rained. He checked the vibrations of the rain – they were cool. He jumped, “Eureka!”

His kundalini danced with joy!

Chapter 7 - The Rusty Pelican

Nature has inbuilt a magnet inside Pelicans that guides them to travel across long distances. This magnet is Shri Ganesha. Before winter the Pelicans travel from Russia to India to lay their eggs. But because of pollution the weather is changing all over the world. A lot of storms and tornados are making it difficult for them to cross such long distances. The last time a pelican, named Grace, tried to cross, she got caught in such a windy storm that it blew off her wings. How could she fly without wings? The helpless Grace fell down by the Dal lake in Dharamsala.



Ashish, a poor boy from Nadi village was fishing in the lake. He saw this strange looking bird fall from the sky. He had never seen such long legs and

big beaks in a bird before. He tried to make friends with her by gently stroking her. She responded, to say that she accepted his friendship. He was surprised to find her feathers were gone. She was no longer able to fly. It was getting dark, and he remembered how last month the wicked fox had stolen his sister's golden chicks. The only way to save the pelican from the fox was to take her home.

He called his friend, "What should I do?"

The friend said, "Take her home."

"Where will the pelican sleep?"

His friend remembered his mother had stored an old cardboard box in the attic, "we can fix a home for her in a cardboard box."

Together they swept the straw from his cow shed and stuffed it in the cardboard box. "Voila! a home for the pelican is fixed. She can rest in the comfort of her cosy home!"

The pelican seemed pleased and lifted her beak to say, "Thank you. I am proud of my new home."

In the morning, Ashish was woken up by the twitter of birds. He looked out of the window but it was too early for the song birds. Then he realized the sound was coming from the pelican's cardboard box. He peered into it and saw little chicks staring into his eyes. He jumped with joy – the pelican had given birth to 4 little chicks.

Normally, the mother Pelican feeds her chicks. She flies to sea shores to hunt for fish. Her long beak has enough storage space for carrying the fish home. Then she presses the fish into the beak of her children. But the Grace Pelican could not fly, so how to feed the chicks?

Ashish's friend was the one who always came out with bright ideas. "We have to play the role of the Mother Pelican. Let's catch the fish at Dal lake and then we will press it into the beaks of the chicks and their Mother."

That's how they managed to feed the chicks through the winter. Come spring, the chicks became strong and fluttered their wings to fly. On a sunny spring morning their twitter expressed their restlessness to fly. So, Ashish let them out.

They looked longingly at the open sky. Ashish understood they wanted to fly home and were waiting for his permission. He was sad to let them go,

but knew that they had grown up, and the time had come for their flight to freedom. He kissed each Pelican and lifted them into the sky. The Pelicans fluttered their wings and took off. He watched them for a long time praying for their safe journey to their homeland. Finally, they disappeared into the horizon.

With a heavy heart he returned to feed the Mother Pelican, but she was heartbroken and refused to eat. To cheer her up he carried her to Dal Lake. For a long time, the Pelican stared into the water, remembering how she had landed here. Suddenly her beak dashed into the water and caught a fish. She turned to Ashish gleefully to say that though she could not fly, she could still hunt. Soon, she became Ashish's hunting companion. As Ashish grew older his eye sight weakened and he could not catch any fish. But the Pelican with her sharp eye and agility caught a lot of fish. Gradually, she became the bread winner of the family.



Ashish mused, "If you do a good deed to somebody, it always comes back to you."

But wait, come winter, Ashish had a lot of surprise guests. The magnet inside the four Pelicans was like an inner compass that showed them the way back to their mother. When the Mother Pelican saw them, she danced in delight. Ashish had tears of joy. But this time he knew they had returned

to lay their eggs, and he must prepare. He borrowed cardboard boxes from his friend and fixed cosy homes for each of his grand-children!

Chapter 8 - Brave Arjuna's palace

When the Pandavas came to Indraprastha to establish their new kingdom Arjuna requested the Mayasura to build a beautiful palace for them. He began building the most magnificent palace in the world. Pure white marble was brought by elephants from distant mountains. Wood cutters were employed to chop forests for making doors and windows.

One day as a woodcutter went to chop the wood in the forest, while cutting the wood he lost grip on his axe and it fell into the lake. He dived into the lake to retrieve the axe but could not find it. The Goddess of the forest, Shri Van Devi came to the forest to enquire. She found the poor woodcutter in tears sitting by the lake. Upon enquiry, he revealed that his axe had fallen in the lake.

Shri Van Devi enquired, "did you ask permission of the tree before chopping it?"

"No."

Shri Van Devi explained, "You see everything in nature is created by Shri Adi Shakti. She created this forest. Hence, you have to take the permission of the trees before taking their wood, otherwise you are punished - like you lost your grip and the axe fell in the lake. First, you must beg forgiveness from the tree then look for the axe."

How to do that?

"You must hug the tree with a lot of love, and humbly ask its permission to cut it. One thing more, you have to promise to give it new life by planting another tree. If you take from nature without giving something back then you are like a thief who is stealing from nature. Like amongst friends, if we accept a present from someone, we also give him a return present."



“Likewise, even when you pluck flowers you must take their permission and in return thank them by giving it vibrations. Plants become healthy with vibrations. One thing more, always remember plants sleep after sunset. So, you must not disturb them. Flowers should not be plucked after sunset.”

The woodcutter followed her advice and hugged the tree. Next, he circled it three times taking the mantra of Shri VanaDevi sakshat Shri Adi Shakti ... and asked its forgiveness. The vibrations were cool.

Shri Van Devi put her hand in the lake and pulled up a golden axe, “Is this the one?”

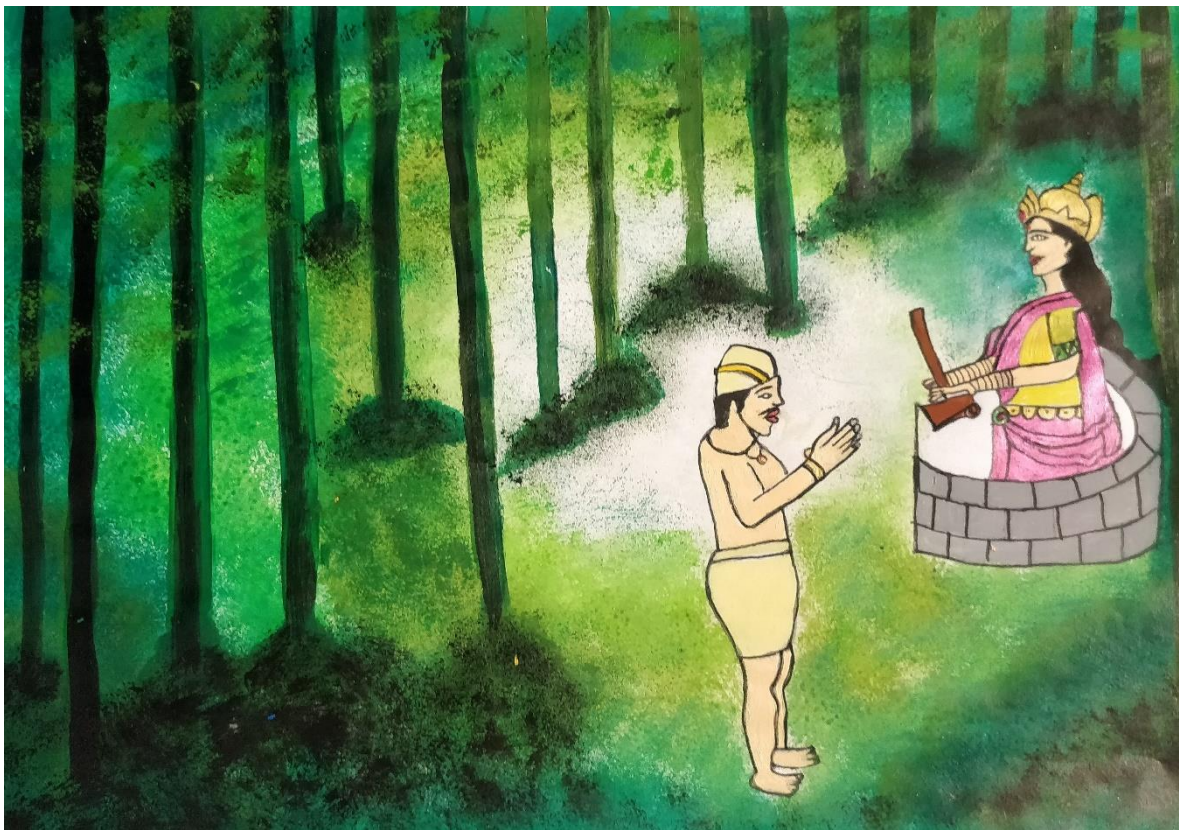
“No”, he replied.

Second time, Shri Van Devi pulled out a silver axe, “is this the one?”

“No”, he replied.

The third time Shri Van Devi pulled out an iron axe, “is this the one?” He happily nodded, “yes”.

Shri Van Devi was pleased with the honesty of the woodcutter. He was not greedy for gold or silver. So she made him an axe like Shri Ganesha’s axe that could cut ten times more wood than before.



With the blessings of the axe, wood started reaching the palace much faster, and the building work also finished before time.

Arjuna was delighted with the speed at which the palace got built, and thanked Shri Van Devi. She said, “actually the credit goes to the hard work of all the workers, and especially the honest woodcutter.”

Arjuna invited his wife Draupadi to reward all the workers with gold. But to the woodcutter he gifted the entire forest, and said, “I proclaim you the king of the forest. But first you have to plant as many trees as you have chopped,

so your kingdom can grow. When the forest grows it will bring timely rain in your kingdom. The trees attract rain. Where there are trees it rains, but where there are no trees it does not rain. Thus, rain will bring you prosperity.

His wise elder brother Yudhister added, “we spent 12 years of exile in the forests. As we rested against the trees’ generous trunks, not only did they take away all our tiredness but they also cured us of insect bites.”

The divine physicians Nakul & Sahdeva revealed, “The Goddess of the Forest Shri VanaDevi has blessed the trees with medicinal qualities that heal, and boost our immunity. They are a great source of oxygen. We have to thank them for constantly cleaning our ecosystem. Sitting under trees gives us health and happiness. Personally, we would love to live under trees rather than in a palace.”

Arjuna nodded, “of course, on weekends we will visit the forest for picnics, and spend the day resting against their soothing trunks. With their inspiration we will compose a prayer of thanks to them!”

Nakul & Sahdeva smiled, “But don’t forget to make a small offering of vibrations to the trees.”

Thereafter, whenever the Pandavas visited the forest they gave vibrations to the trees. They also composed beautiful prayer in praise of the trees:

“I think we shall never see a prayer as lovely as a tree

On its bosom snow has lain,

Who intimately lives with rain,

Prayers were made by warriors like us

But only Shri Adi Shakti can make a tree.”

Chapter 9 - Bal Shakti

If you happen to visit the Sahaja Yoga Health Centre in Mumbai you will cross a busy street but its vibrations are cool - it is called Her Holiness Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi marg. Just around its corner there is a beautiful park where you can see children play. On Sunday mornings the sahaja children gather there for picnics. They are called Bal Shakti – meaning the children who do things together get the shakti of their Mother Shri Mataji. Her shakti is very powerful but also very loving. With a lot of love the children make an altar of Shri Mataji under a big shady tree. They sing bhajans and offer flowers in a small puja. After aarti they perform short plays, dances and narrate stories. It is so much fun and spreads cool vibrations in the park.



After the entertainment, the mothers bring picnic basket of goodies - fruits, chocolates, chips, Kurkures and juices. Auntie Ninke brings yummy sandwiches. But wait, there is big chocolate cake for all the birthdays of the week. And don't forget the surprise collective gifts for the birthday ones.



After the feast the children have a lot of fun on slides, swings and also a jungle gym where they climb across and hang like bats. There are also races with all the cats and dogs that live in the park. But dogs are bossy and chase the poor cats away. So, the Bal Shakti decided to have a separate race for the dogs and cats.

The dog team won the prize of big juicy bones. There was one bone for each dog. But the dogs grew greedy and started fighting. Each dog wanted to grab all the bones for himself, and did not allow the others to have their share. So while the dogs barked, growled and chased each other away, the cats quietly stole all the bones and had a big feast! By the time the dogs were tired of fighting they realized all the bones were gone. What a mistake they had made. They felt very sorry for themselves.

Moral: share everything, even if it is little. But if you try to grab the share of others then you are being greedy, and like the dogs you will lose even what you have. And then feeling sorry does not help!

Chapter 10 - The Dancing Elephant

Did you hear the story of Maharana Pratap? He was the one who went to battle on his horse Chetak. Chetak stood on his two hind legs so Maharana Pratap could chop the bad guy with his sword. The bad guy was seated on the elephant. But the elephant carried a long blade in his trunk & it cut the legs of chetak. So, Chetak the horse fell and Maharana Pratap lost the battle.

In India the person who looks after elephants is called *mahout*. In our village lived a mahout whose name was Vijay. He was very fond of his elephant. He had a son whose name was Arjun. Arjun loved elephants and wanted to become a mahout when he became big. So, on his seventh birthday his father presented him a baby elephant.

Arjuna was very excited and kissed the baby elephant. The baby elephant also liked him and trumpeted with joy.

Vijay taught Arjuna how to take care of the baby & feed him. Elephants love water. So, every morning he would take him to the river for a bath. Vijay would sit on his back and brush him. Baby elephants are amazingly playful and he would gather water in his trunk and spray it on Arjuna.

The family had a banana tree in the garden. One day Arjuna caught the baby elephant



stand on its two hind legs and steal the bananas. He trumpeted, "Ah, the bananas are delicious. Can I have more." But first, Arjun wanted to teach him how to dance by swinging his trunk. So, he held the bananas before him and showed him the steps. When the baby elephant copied the steps perfectly, he rewarded him with the bananas. So, the baby elephant came to be called the dancing elephant. In the evening all the village children would gather to watch him dance and if he performed well, they would reward him with bananas.

Arjun taught him how to play with the ball. He would throw the ball and then the elephant would catch it with its trunk and throw it back. Soon he became the goalkeeper of the village football team. He became rather good at catching balls.

On the elephant's third birthday Vijay told Arjun, "He needs his freedom, he has to return to the forest."

Arjun cried, "I can't let my brother go!"

Vijay explained, "Now the time has come for him to return to his parents, they miss him very much. But you can always visit him."

Arjuna asked, "But who will brush him?"

Vijay showed him how the elephants brush their bodies by rubbing against tree trunks.

Arjuna bid a tearful goodbye to his dear friend. The elephant parents were overjoyed at the return of their baby. Elephants are very loving animals. The mother became very protective of him and would hunt delicious fruits for him.

Of course, Arjuna missed him very much, and did not eat his lunch. So, in the morning, Vijay took him to the Ganesh Temple and showed him the idol of Shri Ganesha with a baby elephant's trunk. He told him the story of how Lord Shiva had cut the head of Shri Ganesha, and when Shri Parvati was mad at him, he put the head of a baby elephant on him and brought him back to life. Arjuna felt cool vibrations and asked, "can we take the idol home?"

The priest agreed. Arjuna was very happy, and every morning he would offer bananas to the Shri Ganesha idol.

When Arjuna grew up, he trained as a mahout like his father. He began taking village children for elephant rides. The Ganesh festival was around the corner. Arjuna was invited to escort a parade of elephants. The elephants were brought from all over the country. He had to choose an elephant for carrying the idol of Shri Ganesha. As he was inspecting the elephant, one elephant lovingly put his trunk around him.

He looked at him, surprised. The elephant started dancing the steps he taught him.

Arjuna jumped with joy, "Oh, you are my baby elephant!"

Elephants never forget. They not only have a long memory, but are the wisest of animals.

Chapter 11 - Najar Singh's donkey

There are several small villages in the hamlets below the Dhauladhar snow line, in Dharamsala, India. The hill slopes are steep and there are no roads. But donkeys can go where there are no roads. Nature has given them feet that can catch on to steep slopes and rocks. Najar Singh was thirteen & lived with his uncle near the Guna Mata Temple below the snow line. He earned his bread by delivering supplies from village to village on his donkey. One day when Najar Singh was away, the inquisitive donkey poked his nose into the sacks and helped himself to a snack.



In the evening when the donkey returned home, Najjar Singh would feed him, and then they would play together. He loved the donkey very much and the donkey bonded with him like a puppy dog. When winter came, the bridle paths got snow covered. There were no supplies for Najjar Singh to deliver and so he had no money to buy food. When Najjar Singh was away at school, his uncle sold the donkey to a merchant in the neighbouring village.

When Najjar Singh returned home he was heart- broken and cried himself to sleep. In the morning, he woke up before his uncle and walked for hours to the neighbouring village to find his donkey. The donkey jumped with joy to meet him. Najjar Singh told the merchant that he cannot live without his donkey, and offered to stay close to him and work as a porter. The merchant agreed. The merchant's son was Shiv who was of the same age as Najjar Singh, and they became good friends.

On the occasion of Shiv's birthday, the merchant invited the whole village for a feast. He had promised Shiv a birthday gift. Shiv asked that the donkey be returned to Najjar Singh.

His dad was surprised, "but I told you to ask a gift for yourself."

Shiv answered, "My grandfather said that Mother Goddess Nirmala Devi is more pleased when we ask something for others. And as this birthday gift will make her happy, it makes me happy."

His dad nodded approvingly, "True, it gives more joy to give presents than receive them."

The tears of gratitude in Najjar Singh's eyes fulfilled Shiv's heart with a joy that all the gifts in the world could not give.

Najjar Singh departed happily along with his donkey. They bonded like brothers, and never forgot each other. They always spent their holidays together.

Even today if you visit the Guna Mata Temple across Nadi village you will hear the happy notes of Najjar Singh's flute fill your heart with brotherly love.

Chapter 12 - Why the Camel is Called the Ship of the Desert

During winter holidays Dharamsala school children were travelling to Ganapatipule for Christmas puja. The train stopped in Bikaner. The princess of Bikaner invited them to stay in her fairy tale palace. Next morning, they drove to Udaipur to meet the Maharana who a descendant of Maharana Pratap. He told them heroic tales of Maharana Pratap and showed them his sword and the armour he wore on the battlefield.

Next day they took a trip to the desert.

Where there is no water, nothing can grow, and the land turns into a desert. The desert was full of sand dunes and difficult to drive through. So, they decided to cross the desert on camel back. Camels are the only animal that have remained unchanged since the time of the dinosaurs. They have a remarkable quality – they can live without water for days. That is why they are called ships of the desert. If you have nothing to eat, they don't mind if you drink their milk. They loved the cool vibrations of the school children and made them comfortable on their humped backs.

In the night, the guide put a tent for the children. The villagers danced and sang beautiful folk songs. It was accompanied by an instrument that looked like an ancient version of the guitar. It is called *ek tara* – meaning one string instrument. Though the desert is very hot during the day, it cools very quickly at night. For sure you need a blanket. But the children had none, so they lit a bon fire, and prayed to Agni Devata to keep them warm.

In the morning, they began crossing the desert. It became greener towards noon. They finally reached a lake full of so many beautiful birds. They had never seen such birds before. Where did they come from?

The guide explained, “During winters the birds fly from Russia because the snow covers everything, and they cannot find anything to eat. So they come

here. We have plenty of fish in the lake. When the snow melts in the spring, they return. “

“But Russia is thousands of miles away. How do they find the way?”

The guide smiled, “You know something, there is a deity called Shri Ganesha who lives in their Mooladhara chakra, and he shows them the way.”

A seven-year old boy shot up, “I also have a Mooladhara chakra, so will Shri Ganesha also show me the way to Russia.”

The guide laughed, “But you can fly on a plane to Russia... Still there is something more important that Shri Ganesha can show you – how to obey his Mother Goddess Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi.”

The children nodded, “Yes we know the story of how Shri Ganesha and Shri Kartikeya had a competition – who could go around the earth first. Poor Shri Ganesha only had a small mouse, how could he win the race against a fast bird like the peacock! But then he went around his mother 3 times and won the race because His Mother was also the Mother Earth.”

Just then a peacock appeared from nowhere and started to dance, showing off his beautiful feathers.

The guide warned, “We should get inside our tents, because when the peacock dances, it means rain.”

But the children would not listen and stayed on to watch the peacock dance. Then it rained and they all got wet.

The next day they woke with a cold, and sneezed all day!!!

The teacher said, “One thing more Shri Ganesha gives us is wisdom. If you are wise you obey your elders and if you had gone inside you would not have caught a chill.”

The children pulled their ears, “Sorry, Shri Mataji.”

Shri Mataji was pleased, and the Sun suddenly beamed, and cured their cold. The children thanked her, and once again ran out to dance with the peacocks. The Russian birds also joined them and chirped their happy songs.

Chapter 13 - A Christmas Surprise

One year we celebrated Christmas puja in Rome. The birth of Lord Jesus Christ is an occasion of great joy, and yogis from all over the world gathered to worship their beloved Mother Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi in the form of Shri Ganesha.

The Rome ashram had a children school which later shifted to Borotin. The children performed a play in which Shri Ganesha danced before him Mother and pleased her. Shri Mataji hugged all the children and gave them lovely Christmas presents.

After the puja, Amit and Pragma invited their school friends for a celebration of their wedding anniversary. They were married a day after the Christmas puja in Ganpatipule by Shri Mataji.

Rome is best known for its pizzas. They have all kinds – with cheese, olives, tomatoes, ham or chicken. But the most delicious is called Margherita. It is a big pizza with a very thin crunchy crust – that you can only find in a special pizzeria near the Sistine Chapel. The Sistine chapel is very famous for the painting of Michelangelo on its ceiling. Amit is very fond of art and also paints. He always wanted to see this painting. So, they decided to visit the Chapel on the way to the pizzeria. The painting of the Last Judgment showed God surrounded by beautiful angels, as he threw all the bad guys into the fire of hell.

When they came out of the Chapel, they saw 4 beggar children searching for leftover food in the dust bin. They remembered Shri Mataji's talk about the love of Christ and how he distributed bread to the poor. Christ's love flowed in their hearts and instead of buying the Margherita pizza for themselves they bought it for the hungry children.

The beggar children said, "You must be those beautiful angels from the painting of the Last Judgment."

Amit smiled, "Oh No, we are just humble children of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi."

“Please thank Shri Mataji for this delicious Christmas gift!”

The tears of joy in the eyes of the hungry children satisfied their nabhi chakra, and Pragya and Amit forgot about dinner.

When they returned to the Ashram, the yogis said, “Shri Mataji has been looking for you, She has laid a feast for all the newly married couples.”

There was a big feast laid out of Italian dishes, and also their favorite pizza Margherita. They ate to their heart’s content. Not just that, Shri Mataji had baked pound cakes - a recipe from her mother.

As each couple bowed before Shri Mataji, she blessed them with a silver puja tray.

Pragya was very happy, “See, if you do even a little good to others, Shri Mataji blesses you ten times!”

Chapter 14 - Deepak the Lion Hearted

Dogs love children, and are very protective of them. Children also love to cuddle dogs, and play with them. Yes, dogs are their best friends. Dogs are very obedient to their master, and so a master or a guru always has a dog following him. You know the story of Yudhishter the oldest brother of the Pandavas – a dog followed him to heaven. But the watchman would not allow him to enter, “Heaven is no place for dogs.”

Yudhishter replied, “this dog has given me so much love, and if you don’t allow him to enter, I will not enter heaven.”

The watchman allowed the dog to enter.

When the sahaja children prepared to do puja to Shri Mataji as their Guru, they thought, “What present can we give our guru?”, because the guru is the teacher and some present has to be offered as a token of gratitude.

A very sweet girl with angel like face and shinning eyes had a dog. she said, “My dog has just given birth to a beautiful golden puppy. What better present can be offered to the Guru than a puppy!”

Shri Mataji was very pleased with the offering of the puppy and took him in her lap. She named it Deepak; meaning light. The puppy would sleep in her bedroom and also sit by her side during the pujas. In the evenings the children would teach him many games – they would throw a ball and he would go and fetch it. He became a very good playmate.

When Deepak was one-year old, Shri Mataji was returning to India. Deepak began to cry, so Shri Mataji brought him to India.

The children at Dharamsala school prayed to Shri Mataji for a dog. So Shri Mataji kindly sent Deepak to play with them. The children were very happy, and always shared their parcels from home with him – someone brought him biscuits, another nuts, even cakes. But he liked chocolates the best! But

chocolates were only given to him when he won a race with the children. Deepak was also very sensitive to vibrations and would not accept chocolates from naughty children.

But too much chocolates gave him a tummy upset. Whenever he had a tummy upset, he would eat mud.

The teacher explained, “Dogs eat mud because it has the minerals that are good for their tummy.”

The school cook used to throw the leftover food outside the gate. At night the bears would come from the jungle to eat it. The children would flash torches to watch them a distance. But there was one Rakshasa who entered a bear and started to enter inside the school to eat the children.

Dogs have a very sharp sense of smell, and can smell Rakshas even if they hide inside bears. Deepak picked up the evil rakshasa's bad smell. His ears stood up, and he knew the children were in danger. He had to protect them. He struggled to loosen his chain, and rushed towards the children's dormitory. The bad bear was trying to break the dormitory door. Deepak knew he must save the children from this rakshasa. He growled like a lion and attacked him. The bear stood up and tried to catch Deepak in his big arms. but Deepak was Shri Mataji's dog and she had given him the strength of Shri Hanumana. Like the lion of Mahishasur Mardini hit hard at the boar form of the demon Mahishasura, Deepak swiftly escaped his arms and bit hard into his neck. Blood starting oozing from the bear's neck and he fell on the ground making a huge thud. Then like Narsimaha tore open Hiranyakashap's heart, Deepak with his sharp claws dug deep and tore open the bear's heart. The rakshasa seated in the bear's heart died immediately. That is how the brave Deepak saved the children from the rakshasa even at the cost of his life.

The children cheered in glee, and hugged Deepak. He had suffered some injuries, and collectively they raised his kundalini and gave him vibrations. He was very tired and slowly he fell into a long sleep.

In the morning they made a garland and put it around Deepak. Then they seated him on a hero's chariot and marched to Shri Mataji's temple outside the school. They knew they were valiant Nirmala-lights and carried the light of Shri Mataji. They were under her protection so there was nothing to fear. But to stay in her protection they must always take a bandhan. So, they took bandhans and sang 'onward march valiant Nirmala-lights' as they marched. On reaching the temple they thanked Shri Mataji for saving them from the

horrible Rakshasa, and offered flowers & chocolates at Her Lotus Feet. Shri Mataji blessed them with cool vibrations and they danced with joy.

Then prasad was distributed, and of course, Deepak was allowed to lap up most of the chocolates. But the children also rewarded him with a beautiful new collar. On the collar was written Deepak – the lion hearted. He was proud of his new title and barked with pleasure.

The good bears continued to eat the leftover food every night. But the children are no longer afraid of rakshasas because they knew they are in the loving Bandhan of their Beloved Mother. So, every night before going to bed they do foot soak, raise their kundalini and take a bandhan.

They also know how to invite the ganas by putting their right hand on the centre heart and saying Jagadamba twelve times. It makes them even more powerful against the rakshasas.

Chapter 15 - The Hunter's Net

In the winter the land is covered with snow, so vegetables can't grow. People hunt birds and animals for food. A hunter liked bird meat, and searched the forests looking for golden eagles. But they stay perched atop a mountain or on tree tops. He watched them for a few days & discovered they come down in the early morning hours to feed on worms that come out of the earth with the first rays of the sun. The next morning, he spread a net to catch them.

As it got warmer a group of eagles arrived happily tweeting to each other, "Ah, there are a lot of worms out today, we will have a grand feast!"



Just then they fell into the net and got trapped. They tried to bite the net but it was too hard for their beaks. So they prayed to their king Jatayu to save them (Jatayu had died saving Sitaji when Ravana was taking her away in his flying chariot pushpak).

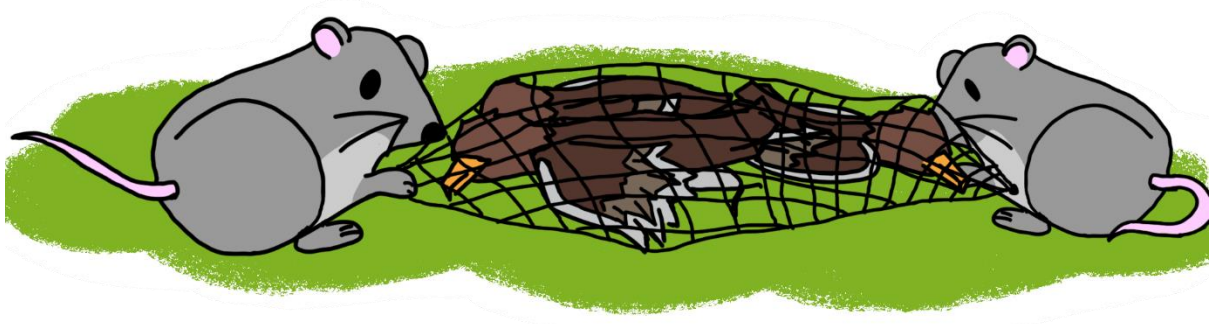
He tweeted, “the one who is alone, is weak – but if you all join together you can become very powerful. Together, you should spread your wings at the same time and fly. Though you will be inside the net, still you can carry the net and fly across to the mice on the other side of the mountain and ask them to cut the net with their sharp teeth.”

The birds did likewise. They said, “One, two, three!” and shot into the sky carrying the net with them. They flew across the mountains. The mice lived in their tiny burrows, and were very busy searching nuts for the winter.

The birds prayed to the mice, “Oh brothers, please save us! The hunter has trapped us in this net and we cannot come out. Please, cut the net with your sharp teeth.”

The mice are very humble and sweet. They are always ready to help others. That is why Shri Ganesha rides on a mouse.

The mice went crunch, crunch, crunch - cut through the net, and set the birds free.



The birds thanked them, and told them the precious advice from their king – “Alone you are weak but if you come together, you become strong, and can fight the enemy.”

The mice remembered their advice.

There was a big cat who would come every evening to eat them. So together, hundreds of them attacked the cat from all sides and the cat ran away.

In the evening they celebrated their victory with a song, “United we stand, divided we fall!”

Chapter 16 - The Golden Hen

Priya was seven years old, and lived on a farm with her parents, two brothers, and an older sister. The father grew potatoes, corn, carrots, peas and cauliflower. They also kept cows for milk and cottage cheese. But Priya had her own favourite golden hen. She built a small hen house for her. She fed her with the leftovers from her mother's kitchen. Well fed, the hen grew up to be very big and would lay up to two eggs every day.

But two eggs a day were not enough for a family of six, and the children would quarrel at breakfast for the eggs. So, their mother found a solution – she would save the eggs till they added to 6, and only then they were served for breakfast. Sometimes if there were some extra eggs, she would make a delicious egg pudding with bread crusts. Priya would add some raisins to it. On festivals their Mother would cook a special treat of egg halva!

One night, Priya forgot to lock the door of the hen house. When nobody was watching a fox stole into the hen house and ate the golden hen. Priya usually woke in the morning with the hen's croak. But on that morning, there was silence. Something must be wrong thought Priya and she went running to the hen house. It was empty except for the golden feathers of the hen.

Priya wept and wept for her golden hen. No one could stop her tears and she fell sick with grief. They called the doctor but even his medicine did not help. Day by day she grew weaker and paler. Everyone got worried.

Their neighbour also kept hen. One night the hen gave birth to a beautiful golden chic. He was very fond of Priya, and he thought of giving the chic to her. When Priya saw the golden chick, she felt her golden hen had come back to her, and her health became better.

She took good care of the chick and never forgot to lock the door of her hen house. Her mother smiled, "It does not matter if we commit mistakes, provided we learn from them."

The golden chic grew up just as big and beautiful like Priya's golden hen. Once again, the family enjoyed egg halwa for festivals.

Chapter 17 - The Fragrance of the Deities

With the blessing of Indra Devata Dharamsala gets plenty of rain. The rain has given birth to forests of evergreen deodar trees. There are also orchards of walnuts, chestnuts, almonds, cherry, apples, apricots, pears and peach trees. After the snow melts the villagers graze their sheep on lush green grass, and crop their wool for making coats for the winter. At the Dharamshala school the children grow roses to offer on the altar of Shri Mataji, and hibiscus flowers to Lord Ganesha.

A lot of tourists visit the Sahaja Yoga Ashram, Talnoo in Dharamshala, to get their realization. But they also litter the area with trash – water bottles, plastic wrappings of Kurkures, chips, biscuits and coke cans. There was too much trash accumulated in the summer, and it choked the river. The Himalaya could not even breathe. So, Indra Devata got angry and did not send any more rain.

With a very hot summer and no rain, there was shortage of drinking water. The trees dried up and there were no more flowers to please the Deities. The school children went to Delhi for Shri Mataji's birthday puja and they prayed for her help. Shri Mataji gave a bandhan to Indra Devata, and vibrations became cool. She smiled, "It will rain but you must keep the surroundings clean."

The children returned to Dharamsala and made cleanliness teams to keep everything clean. They made brooms out of thorny bushes and cleaned the mountain. The girls swept the road and the boys collected all the trash in bins. But the tourists kept coming and throwing trash. So, the children fixed dust bins all along the road and told the tourists to throw all the trash in them. The children took turns to clean the dustbins. With all the trash cleared, the rivers started to flow and the Himalaya could breathe again. Indra Devata was pleased and showered rain again. The roses and hibiscus flowers came back to life. The children offered them at the Lotus Feet of Shri Mataji. It pleased the Deities very much, and they blessed the children with their

sweet fragrance. Their kundalinis danced atop their heads with the sweet fragrance but they never knew where the fragrance came from.

Chapter 18 - Dahi Handi

In the month of August there is a lot of rain. Five thousand years ago, on a similar rainy and stormy night Lord Krishna was born in Mathura.

The child Krishna was very fond of butter. During his birthday celebrations the Dharamsala school children enacted the drama of him stealing the butter. The mothers of Vrindavan stored butter in clay pots & hang them from the roof ledge to keep them out of reach of the children.

The drama was called *Dahi Handi*. The school Children made a formation like a pyramid. The younger children stood on the backs of the senior ones – one on top of the other, till they reached the height where the handi was hung. The 7-year old Ravi was the youngest, and the lightest. So, he was chosen to stand on the top. On climbing to the top, he broke the handi with a stone. All the butter poured down and the children had a lot of fun licking the butter.

Come winter, the school closed & the children returned home. As the snow fell, a lonely white cat came looking for shelter in a dry & quiet place. She made herself comfortable in the school veranda and it became her winter home.

In April the school opened & the children returned. They were surprised to find such a beautiful white cat in their veranda. The cat got frightened to see so many children and decided to shift above the ledge of the dorm. But the children shared the biscuits from their parcels & made friends with her. She was not scared anymore and allowed them to stroke her soft white fur. Whenever there was a feast, they would invite her to their dorms.

One day the cat did not come down from her home on the ledge. The children missed her, and looked everywhere, but could not find her. Suddenly they heard the mew of kittens. Ah! the cat had given birth to 4 kittens. The children were very excited to see the tiny kittens, but the cat was very protective of the kittens. She would not allow them to come down because there was a fox who

lived in a cave in the jungle & if she smelled the kittens, she would gobble them.

The kittens were full of fun & play. The youngest kitten was the naughtiest. He was very curious, and liked to climb new places and poke his nose to find out what was going on. One day, when the cat was away collecting food for her kittens, the naughty kitten climbed on the tin roof. He had learnt how to climb up but not how to climb down. So, he was stuck & started crying for his mother, “Meow... meow.... Meow...”

He made such a fuss that it attracted the attention of the children. “Oh God! The poor kitten is stuck on the roof.”

The children loved the kittens and were worried, “What should we do?”

“He will die if we don’t bring it down?”

Then the 7-year old Ravi said, “Remember when we played Dahi Handi, we formed a pyramid and stood on top of each other’s backs to reach the roof. Well, let’s do the same now and reach out to the poor kitten. They went into action - the senior boys bent down, the juniors climbed atop their backs, and layer by layer they formed a pyramid. But this pyramid was higher than the last one, and so had more children to bear. The seniors felt tired with so much weight on their backs. But they were brave children of Shri Mataji, and they prayed to Shri Hanuman to give them strength to bear the burden. Not long before they felt his power within. Thus Ravi reached the top, held the kitten in his arms, and then climbed down.

“Hurrah!” The children yelled in glee, “Jai Hanumana! Jai Shri Mataji!”

The mother cat did not know how to say thank you, so she licked their face lovingly.

To keep the kittens safe, they decided to make a home out of card boards in the veranda. They had packed a lot of stuff in cardboard boxes. So, they emptied the cardboard boxes and put them together into a room for the kittens.

But at night there was the danger of the cunning fox. So, they asked the dorm aunty if they could bring the kittens in their dorm at night. The dorm aunty agreed, “But make sure you keep the dorm clean.”

The children were delighted, and each child took a turn to snuggle with a kitten in his bed. But the kittens looked alike and it was difficult to

differentiate. So, they made collars for them with their names. Of course, the naughty one was called spiderman, and the other male – Harry Potter. The females were named Snow White & Cinderella.

Chapter 19 - The Naughty Crow

When Kitty was about seven, her parents would visit a nearby stream where she would collect little white pebbles and place them in her corner in the garden. On sunny mornings the family ate breakfast in the garden. She enjoyed watching squirrels run up and down the silver Oak trees. There were also plenty of birds who provided the morning songs. But there was one crow that always cawed. Her mother said that when crows caw it means some guests are coming! The crow would patiently wait for kitty to finish her breakfast, and save half her toast for him. But he had a curious habit of gathering it in his beak & dipping it in the pond before flying off. Her mother explained that crows dip food in the water to soften it for their babies!

After breakfast Kitty played with her pebbles. Gradually she complained that they were becoming less and less. But why would anyone steal pebbles? They asked the gardener if he had removed them. He replied he had not. Funnily, they started finding the pebbles perched in unlikely places – in the crevices of the garden wall or behind bushes. As the Crow watched Kitty play with the white pebbles, he too tried to imitate her. He gathered them in his beak and had fun tossing them around.

Next day, Kitty was very cross with the crow and refused to share her toast. He cawed and cawed pleadingly. She scolded, “You naughty crow, no more toast for you.”

He looked at her with sad eyes, as if to say sorry.

Kitty relented and gave him a smaller bit. He gratefully grabbed it and flew away. After that he never stole her pebbles.

Did you know that Crows are the cleverest of animals, with the intelligence of a seven-year-old kitty!

Crows are social, can make tools, can make amends and even give warning of coming danger. Crows in Japan have understood the working of traffic lights, and take help of speeding cars to crack open walnuts as they wait out the green light!

Chapter 20 - The Rabbit & The Tortoise

Rabbits dig burrows and live in them. They eat greens but their favourite is carrots. A rabbit lived close to a vegetable farm, and his big whiskers picked up the lovely fragrance of fresh carrots. At night, he went to the farm and had a huge feast. The farmer was not angry and set a trap for him. But the rabbit escaped the trap.

In the evening he invited his friends, the squirrel and the tortoise for a party to feed on the carrots he had stolen. The nimble squirrel lived on a Walnut tree and brought down her nuts to share. The tortoise contributed a tiny fish. After they had eaten the rabbit boasted how he ran so fast that even the farmer could not catch him. "Nobody can beat me."



The nimble squirrel humbly agreed, "Oh big brother, for sure, you are the fastest runner. Poor me - I can only run up & down the trees."

But the tortoise said. "Oh, I am very fast too."

The rabbit laughed, "ha ha ha – you are over a hundred years old and with your short legs you are the slowest animal."

The tortoise replied, "Sure, tortoise live to be older than humans, but even if that slows them down, they can still win a race."

The rabbit challenged him, "Let us race and see who wins the prize. The squirrel will be our referee."

Of course, the rabbit was much faster, and was way ahead of the tortoise. But the rabbit had eaten too many carrots and was feeling sleepy. He thought, "The tortoise is far behind. I have so much time ahead of him, ah, I am so full, let me take a short nap."

The rabbit fell fast asleep. He dreamt of the farmer's juicy sweet carrots and went crunch, crunch, crunch, in his sleep.

The tortoise prodded slowly, and saw the sleeping rabbit, and quietly went passed him. The rabbit slept much longer than he thought. By the time he woke up, and reached the end, he could not believe his eyes - the tortoise was already there ahead of him – claiming his prize.

The tortoise smiled, "Slow and steady wins the race!"

Chapter 21 - The Best School in The World

On his 8th birthday, Rahul's grandmother gifted him a book on birds. Rahul was fascinated by the vibrant colours of the birds but he had no time to read it as he was busy preparing for his exams. He shelved it to be read after the exams.

As he had never stepped outside his little world, his father promised to take him to the Himalayas if he excelled in his exams.

His father advised him to study during the early hours of the morning as the brain is fresh and absorbs better. Rahul woke up at four in the morning to study. His attention was diverted by birds singing in his balcony. He made friends with them, and fed them with grains. He admired their beautiful plumes. As he got more acquainted with them, he could differentiate their breed. He was fascinated how the mother bird feeds her offspring. She collects weeds in her beak and then carries them to her offspring in the nest to feed him. One day he observed a little chick fallen from her nest. A bird from a nearby nest adopted it. It helped him understand the compassionate nature of birds, and how they reach out to the helpless.

His curiosity deepened, and he pulled out his bird book to learn their names. The birds too grew fond of him, and were no more afraid to sit on his palms to feed. Furthermore, bird watching relaxed him between lessons. He studied really hard because like the birds he wanted to spread his wings and see the world.

He excelled in his exams, and his father made travel plans to the Himalayas. But Rahul had become passionate about birds. He had read about exotic birds from distant countries that flew to India during winter and he was dying to see them. He persuaded his father to change their travel plans and visit the bird sanctuary in Bharatpur instead. His father could not understand

Rahul's sudden decision but since he had excelled in his exams he relented. They boarded the train to Delhi and from there, took a bus to Bharatpur.

Rahul stood transfixed as he watched the exotic variety of birds in the Bhartpur sanctuary. It was an amazing new world that thrilled every fibre of his being. The sanctuary keeper pointed to rare species looking for fish by the lake, "These birds have flown from Siberia."

He was surprised, "Siberia? But isn't that more than 5,000 kilo meters away?"

"Yes, they come every winter, and because this winter has been colder they stayed longer."

"Do they have a GPS that showed them the route to India?"

The sanctuary-keeper laughed at his innocence, "No, Young man, they have a magnet that gives them the sense of direction."

"An inbuilt magnet? Do we also have an inbuilt magnet that gives us a sense of direction?"

"Of course, we do, but we have forgotten how to use it."

"I would love to know more about it."

The sanctuary keeper was impressed by his seeking and invited him for a coke in his office. On the office wall hung a chart of the human spine with seven circle like chakras marked on it.

"At the bottom of the chakra lies our inbuilt magnet called the Mooladhara chakra."

Rahul's eyes rolled in wonder, "If our Mooladhara chakra has an inbuilt magnet can I use it?"

"But first you must learn how to connect with it."

"Wow! For sure I would like to learnt about it."

"The Mooladhara chakra is made of the earth element. Hence to plug into this chakra we have to respect our Mother Earth. Our ancestors knew about it but today only the humble farmers who plough their fields still know about it. They respect nature - the rivers, forests and mountains. Hence, the magnetic power of earth in their Mooladhara chakra gives them a sense of direction. Through this magnetic power they know when to sow and when to reap.

Last season, before the rains, I watched my next-door farmer sow. But no sooner than he left the field a flock of partridges began feasting on the seeds he had just finished sowing. However, the farmer had not gone far and he felt hot vibrations in his hands coming from his Mooladhara chakra. So, he knew something was wrong in his field. As he returned to his field, he saw the Partridges enjoying a great feast on the seeds. Hoping to get rid of them he fired an empty shot in the air. It worked and the partridges flew away in fright. But soon they caught on that it was an empty shot and returned to feast.

Hoping to scare them once again, the farmer fired a second shot but it did not frighten them anymore and they continued feasting. The farmer realized that the partridges were no more afraid of his empty shots so he loaded his gun and fired. They all died.

Of course, he did not want to kill them, but since they became greedy and wanted to cheat him of all his seeds, he had no choice. After all everyone must get his fair share of his labour. How else would he feed his family without the seeds sprouting into corn.”

Rahul nodded, “Thank you kind Sir for teaching me a lesson that is not contained in any text book. When I return to my school, I will tell all my friends that your bird sanctuary is the best school in the world!”

Chapter 22 - Abracadabra

Ajay, Vijay and Sanjay lived in the same neighbourhood, shared the same bench in school and played together. They were inseparable – what one did the other supported.

Their teacher tried very hard to make them study but they took no interest in it. Though they were smart kids they had a short attention span. Their only wanted to play, and failed in their exams. Their mothers doted on them - prepared their favourite dishes, and pampered them. Ajay's grandfather was a very kind man, and explained that if they did not pass their exams, how would they get a job when they grow up.

The final exams were next month. All the children were studying very hard but instead, the trio went fishing! At that time a magician with a long flowing white beard performed his tricks in the village square. As usual the trio skipped school and went to his magic show. They loved his tricks, and thought the magic was real. They thought if the magic was real then the magician could teach them some magic by which they could pass their exams without studying.

The next day they emptied their piggy bag and collected all the money. They gave it to the magician, and begged him to make them pass the exams. The magician had a long, crooked nose like an owl, and grabbed the money like a hawk.

“Look deep into my eyes” he ordered.

His eyes dilated like a cat.

Then he jumped up and waved his magic wand laughing very loudly, “Ha, ha, ha, Ho, ho, ho. Abracadabra, abracadabra, abracadabra – I order you to step out of heaven, step out of the stars, step out of the moon, and make these stupid kids pass their exams.”

He swirled his black cloak three times, but Abracadabra refused to come. “Abracadabra is angry. He did not get any breakfast this morning. Your money



is not enough to buy his breakfast. He eats three roasted chickens, ham and beacon and 2 dozen eggs for breakfast. Better bring more money.

The trio protested, "But we have already given you all our money."

The magician waived his wand, "I don't care. If you want to pass your exams - beg, borrow or steal. Else there is no deal."

They did not want to beg, borrow or steal, but they sure wanted the deal. They decided to request their kind grandfather for help.

Grandfather gently patted them, "I will give you all the money you need but first you must tell me why you need the money so badly."

"Well, we met a great magician who promised to help us pass our exams through his friend Abracadabra. But Abracadabra refused to come till he has had breakfast, and so we need the money to pay for his breakfast."

Grandfather was a Sahaja yogi. He smiled knowingly, "Don't worry, Abracadabra is an old friend of mine. I will phone him to come tomorrow."

In the morning the trio woke up with great expectations to meet Abracadabra.

Grandfather peered through his spectacles and said, "I spoke to Abracadabra. He would be very happy to help you in your exams but there is one condition. You have to promise to follow that condition."

The condition is that every day after you return from school you will stand before the mirror and repeat to the mirror the lesson you learnt in school. This way abracadabra can hear the lessons and remember them during the exams."

The trio crossed their hearts and promised to follow the condition diligently.

From that day on they started listening attentively to the teacher, and memorized the lessons. After returning home they would stand before the mirror and repeat the lessons.

As they seriously followed the lessons, they had no time to play. Their parents were surprised and wondered what had happened to them. Of course, the grandfather knew, but he never told the secret of Abracadabra to anyone.

Before they went for the exams, grandfather said, "Abracadabra phoned me in the morning to wish you all the best in the exams. He wanted me to give you a message that he will be there to help you in the exam hall but you will not be able to see him."

The message brought their self-confidence back and they happily went to the exams. As they had memorized all the lessons well, they could answer all the questions easily. Of course, they believed that the answers were coming from Abracadabra!

When the results came, all the three friends ranked in the first division. Their teacher could not believe it, "It is a miracle."

The grandfather laughed, "It is not a miracle but the trick of Vishnumaya. Shri Adi Shakti gives us the power of Vishnumaya. she is called Mahamaya because for her everything is just a play. When someone gets lost in Maya then we can pull him out of it with the play of Vishnumaya. The magician was a rakshasa who wanted to trick these innocent kids. He put them in his maya to get more money out of them by teaching them how to steal. He invented a person called Abracadabra and fooled them into believing that he could help them pass exams. Of course, there was no such person, it was all a trick. When they told me why they needed the money then I thought of a game. With the power of Vishnumaya I used the same imaginary Abracadabra to enact a drama that would make them study by telling them to repeat the lessons before the mirror so abracadabra could hear them. But as they had learnt their lesson well, of course they passed!"

"Can we also use the power of Vishnumaya" asked the kids.

"Of course, everyone can use it. She is the sister of Lord Krishna and resides in the chakra on the left side of the neck, called the Vishudhi chakra. But first you must open her chakra."

"How to open the chakra?"

"Very simple. Just put your hands towards the photo of Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi and pray, 'Mother please give me my self realization.'"

They did likewise. They felt cool vibrations singing on their hands and atop their heads.

They bowed down gratefully, "Thank you, Shri Mataji."

Grandfather smiled knowingly, "From now onwards Shri Vishnumaya will not allow anyone to play tricks on you, if you promise to meditate every day. "

"Of course, we will," they assured.

Chapter 23 - The gracious grandfather

Chandan was in class 5 - a bright and well-mannered boy. His grandfather was sick in the hospital. After school he would visit him, and give him vibrations. Day by day Grandfather's health improved with vibrations. Chandan always cheered him up with fun stories about school, stories of his friends and the surprise treats their mothers packed in their lunch boxes. Grandfather was more like a friend to Chandan. Whenever there was a problem Chandan would seek his help.

He narrated the story of a poor boy Vishal, whose mother could not afford to pack a lunch box. Grandfather said you should all share your lunch with him.

One day, Vishal came to school with torn shoes. So Chandan asked grandfather what to do?

Grandfather gave money to buy him a new pair of shoes.

In the evening all the kids played together. But an older boy, Shushant was a big bully. He bullied Chandan, and made him run errands for him. Chandan obediently followed his orders without ever protesting. But one day he hid his mobile. Chandan could not speak to his grandfather on the mobile. Chandan pleaded with Shushant to return his mobile telling him how important it was for him to speak to his sick grandfather as it made him feel better. Missing his grandfather, Chandan started crying. Though Shushant was a bully his attention was not to hurt Chandan. He just enjoyed playing the big guy, because he wanted to show off like the big guy in the movies.

Shushant could not sleep that night. He kept thinking of Chandan's sick grandfather. Perhaps, he might have gotten even sicker. In the morning he woke up with a headache. His mother noticed his glum face and enquired, "What's the matter?"

Shushant asked, "Am I a good boy?"

She gave him a big hug, "Of course, darling."

“But if I did something wrong would I still be a god boy?”

“What did you do?”

“Hmm, I hid Chandan’s mobile. I know it was wrong of me to do.”

His mother replied, “Well, if you realize your mistake, and make amends, then that makes a good boy.”

Shushant’s face lit up, “Yes, I will go to Chandan’s house and return his mobile right away.”

His mother smiled, “And you must say sorry.”

Shushant nodded.

“But there is one thing more you must do.”

“What?”

“Present him your best toy.”

Shushant’s favourite were the skates his dad had given him for Diwali. He saw how Chandan eyed them. So, he presented them to him.

Chandan loved them, and showed them to his grandfather.

Grandfather said, “It is sufficient that Shushant apologized. It is very gracious of him to give away his favourite skates. It is a beautiful feeling when someone does something graciously. If you cherish that feeling you must make it grow. The more such a feeling grows, any time you touch that area, that beautiful feeling pours out in you.

So, you must return the skates Shushant to express your forgiveness. But also add on to that beautiful feeling of graciousness by yourself being gracious to him.”

Chandan did likewise.

Next morning the doorbell rang. A parcel arrived from grandfather. To Chandan’s surprise there was a brand-new pair of skates!

Chandan jumped with joy. “How gracious of grandfather!”

Thereafter, every evening Shushant and Chandan skated together. Next month the school was due to have its annual junior skating competition. Shushant asked Chandan to participate, but Chandan was still nervous.

Shushant encouraged Chandan and taught him how to improve. If Chandan faltered he would give him support. He would always give him a chance to win. That helped build Chandan's confidence and he took part in the competition.

To everyone's surprise he won the competition. Of course, he gave the credit to Shushant, and offered him the prize. But Shushant declined, "your graciousness of offering me the prize is the greatest prize for me, I don't need anything else."

But there was more graciousness awaiting them at home. Grandfather was well and back at home. Not just that - he had bought ticket for everyone for the circus!

Graciousness begets graciousness!

Chapter 24 - Who Is the Other?

When the mighty Mother Ganga was to descend from heaven King Bhagirath prayed to Lord Shiva to check her fury lest she sweeps away Mother Earth with it. Thus, Lord Shiva caught her in his matted locks, and released her after her fury was abated. Still, she flows with powerful currents as she reaches the plains of Haridwar.

At the steps of Mother Ganga temple in Haridwar aarti is performed daily. Devotees light lamps at *Kar ki pauri* and float them in Mother Ganga.

Rajat and his classmates were appearing for grade 8 exams. It was their dream to swim across the river. After their exams they decided to fulfil their dream.

As they inched closer to the river steps, they were drawn by the cool vibrations of a little girl lighting lamps with one that was alight in her hand. She seemed in a hurry, and left behind some lamps unlit.

Rajat looked at her enquiringly.

She said, "I spent all my pocket money to buy oil for the lamps but still it was not enough. I feel so sad I cannot light all the lamps. So now I am only lighting only those lamps who are waiting to be lit."

Rajat responded "Just wait I will get the oil for the other lamps."

The little girl's innocent eyes lit up with a glimmer of hope.

Along with the classmates she lit all the lamps. They offered flowers to Mother Ganga, and then reverently lowered the lamps in leafy boats and floated them in Mother Ganga with a prayer on their lips:

"I do homage to Ganges who is holy and performs enchanting roles.

It washes away the sin of him who bathes in it and drinks its holy waters."

The sacred and heartfelt ceremony filled them with cool vibrations. They watched the lamps chase each other, beat against the banks and then disappear in the open arms of Mother Ganga. Then with folded hands they asked Mother Ganga's permission to step in her waters.

It was a sunny day, and Mother Ganga was full of vibrations. Initially, she was calm and they swam effortlessly. But midway the current became stronger. The class mates decided to return. But Rajat was the adventurous kind, and decided to make it alone. As he swam towards the opposite shore suddenly his leg got caught in a rock. Had he noticed it earlier, he could have avoided it. He tried to free himself but the current was too strong and he could not disentangle his leg. He fought hard but gradually his strength ebbed away. He could feel the current pulling him downwards. He could not resist anymore, and started slipping. He desperately yelled out for help, but his classmates had already reached *Har ki Pauri* and were out of his hearing range.

A 14-year old Sahaja yogi used to come to the river every morning to clean the litter that people threw in the river. He heard someone cry for help. On a closer look he spotted a hand popping out of the waves. He felt as though somebody was drowning within him, and spontaneously dived into the river. He grabbed the hand only to discover that it belonged to the head of a young boy. He tried to pull him out but without success.



Rajat had gulped so much water, he could not speak, but he pointed to the rock. Sudhir understood, and disentangled his leg from the rock.

Rajat was finally free, and Sudhir brought him to safety. The classmates had anxiously watched how Sudhir rescued Rajat. Rajat embraced him warmly and wanted to reward him for saving his life.

Sudhir declined the reward, “Actually I did nothing. I just dived to your rescue because I had a feeling of something drowning within me, and I had to rescue it. Our Mother Shri Mataji Nirmala Devi said, ‘all the good deeds you do for others is just for your own being. Who is the other – is all your own self. You are only trying to help yourself.’”

“Hmm... I will always remember that...”

The friends interrupted, “So let’s begin right away and help Sudhir clean up all the litter people have thrown in the river.”

The next day Rajat and his classmate spread the word in their school, “Clean Mother Ganga project”. Thus, the school took up the project of cleaning the river every weekend.

Of course, Mother Ganga was pleased and blessed her innocent children with cool vibrations. The vibrations cleared their chakras and they all performed so much better in their exams.

Chapter 25 - A Person Who Feels the Pain of Others Has a Good Heart

There is a huge Peepal tree by the Dal Lake. Its large leaves are used by villagers for serving food during festival and weddings. Its roots spread far and wide and it is hard to tell where they begin or end. Its branches spread like a big canopy and afford shelter to birds and ants. A mountain pheasant called Manal also nests in it. One day there was heavy rain and Manal peeped from his nest. He noticed an ant drowning in the lake. The ant was desperately crying for help but there was no one around. He quickly plucked a leaf and placed it next to the ant. The ant gratefully caught the leaf, and climbed on to it. Manal picked up the leaf and put it near the ant hill.

The ant thanked Manal for saving its life, “a person who feels the pain of others has a good heart. And a good heart brings goodness everywhere.”

The ant returned to its ant hill. Ants live collectively. Each one cooperates with the other, and thus they function collectively, much like the cells in the human body. So, when their sister ant was saved by Manal, they all felt gratitude for him, and decided to return the act of kindness to their benefactor.

They observed that hunters often came to the area looking for mountain pheasants. Their meat is very tasty and much liked by mountain people. Also, their head feathers are sought after for decorating hats. The ants deputed their army to protect the Manal from the hunter. One day the ant army spied a hunter approaching the Manal's nest. The hunter spotted Manal easily because of his colourful plumage. The ant army rushed towards him and bit its feet. The hunter yelled in pain and dropped his gun. Manal heard the yell and escaped!

The ants were jubilant that they could save their benefactor!



Chapter 26 - Ganesha Festival

Anakit lived with his parents in the old part of Pune city. Their house was an old *wada* with a centre court yard and a veranda on all sides. It allowed the children to play in the safety of the court yard. A stone stand stood in the centre of the court yard, and a Tulsi plant grew in it. Anakit's mother offered its leaves during her morning puja, and during winter brewed Tulsi tea to ward off colds and fevers.

A parrot cage was perched from the veranda beam. The parrot was nicknamed Poppat because he chattered endlessly. He was friends with Anakit because he fed him his favourite red chilies.

The family celebrated all the traditional festivals. Anakit particularly looked forward to the festival celebrations because his mother cooked the most delicious dishes for God. Of course, they were offered to God but God never ate them. In fact, it was Anakit who got to relish them. His favourite was Ganesha Festival. While most other festivals were celebrated for 2 or 3 days, Ganesh festivities went on for 10 days. Imagine uninterrupted feasts for 10 days!

Each locality put up their own Ganesh *mandap*. Each competed with the other to reinvent the idol of Shri Ganesha in new ways. They also reinvented the traditional modak offering in different flavours – chocolate, strawberry, and Chinese modaks stuffed with noodles. To Anakit's delight this year even pasta and pizzas were added to the prasad menu!

On the first day of the festival the idol of Shri Ganesha was installed, and on the 11th day it was carried to the river for immersion. Anakit was honored to carry the idol on his head in the procession to immerse it in the river. The procession was escorted by a brass band, and people danced all the way. As the procession passed through the market, the crowds bowed their head respectfully to the idol.



Seeing the people bow their heads, Anakit thought that they were paying respect to him. His pride jumped, and he thought he was someone special. Swollen with pride he started shouting at the crowds, “get out of my way, you fools...!”

His father was shocked at Anakit’s sudden arrogant behaviour. He felt heat on his Agnya finger, and guessed the reason behind his sudden change of

behaviour. So he decided to bring down his pride, and relieved him of the honour of carrying the idol.

As Anakit walked quietly in the procession he passed a lot of people but no one even looked at him. He wondered, "I do not understand why the passers-by do not bow before me anymore – in fact they did not even look at me, but just a while ago they were bowing their heads before me."

Gradually, his attention was caught by another procession heading towards the river. He observed the crowds bowing their heads before the idol of Shri Ganesha. Then it dawned upon him that while he was carrying the idol on his head the crowds were bowing to the idol and not to him. He was just the vehicle of the idol. And bingo - his pride came crashing down.

Having realized his mistake, he begged his father's forgiveness.

His father smiled, "You silly boy, I am glad you have learnt the lesson how Shri Ganesha brings down a person's pride. See he rides on a mouse - the humblest of animals. Because Shri Ganesha is so humble, he is wise. But our pride jumps up at the smallest thing. For instance, the one who comes first in studies thinks he is better than others, and the one who comes first in the race also thinks the same. But no one is better than anyone; each one has something special, one maybe good in handcrafts and another in music, dance or drama. Basically, we are all the same in the eyes of God. The idea that we are the best comes from a stupid thing called pride. It was your pride that made a fool of you.

The reason we worship the deities is to learn their divine qualities. So before bidding goodbye to Shri Ganesha you must promise to be humble like him."

Before your pride jumps, pull your ears and ask forgiveness from Shri Ganesha. He always forgives children who are innocent.

Anakit pulled his ears, and crossed his heart with the promise to be humble.

His father was pleased with his cool vibrations, and allowed him to carry the idol one more time!