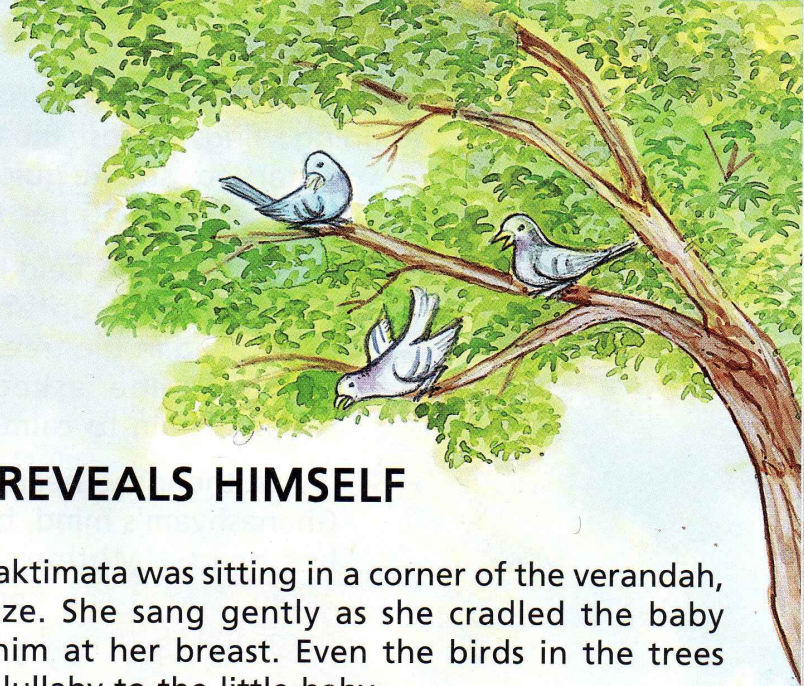


|| Shree Swaminarayano Vijaytetram ||

SHREE GHANASHYAM BAL CHARITRA PART - 3



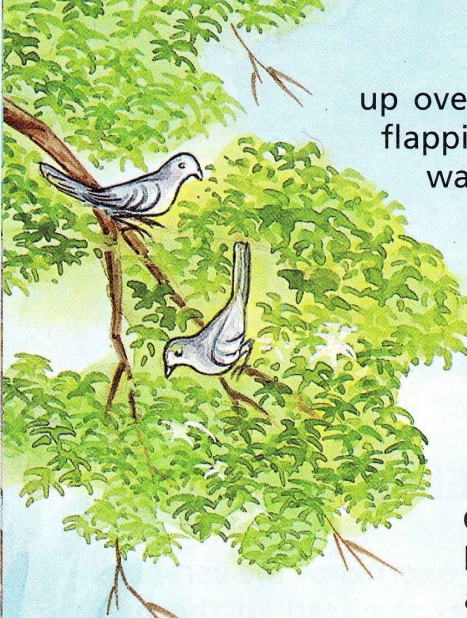


GHANASHYAM REVEALS HIMSELF

It was a warm day. Bhaktimata was sitting in a corner of the verandah, catching the cool breeze. She sang gently as she cradled the baby Ghanashyam, feeding him at her breast. Even the birds in the trees seemed to be singing a lullaby to the little baby.

A sparrow flew down from the tree, and stood in front of the mother and child, chirping loudly. On hearing the sound, Ghanashyam stopped his feeding, and turned to look at the bird. Suddenly the little bird flew






up over the heads of Ghanashyam and his mother. The flapping wings almost hit the baby's head. Ghanashyam was startled, and he quickly turned to the safety of his mother, holding her tightly.

Bhaktimata held her darling boy to her breast. She looked up angrily at the little sparrow perched in the tree. "Why did you scare my little baby?" she asked. She patted and kissed Ghanashyam to calm him down.

Just then, she heard a voice. It was coming from Ghanashyam's mind, but she could hear it clearly in her head. "Mother, why are you worried?" he asked. "Don't you know, there is nothing that can harm me?"



Bhaktimata was touched when she heard the little innocent voice. She cuddled him tightly to her breast as she spoke to him. "You are so small and fragile." she said. "How can you protect yourself?"

Ghanashyam's inner voice answered her. "Mother, do you not know who I am? I am Aksharatit, and Purnapurshottam. And you are my mother, Bhakti. And my father is Dharma. And my elder brother is in reality Shankarshana. Knowing this, do you think there is anything that can do me harm?"



Hearing this, Bhaktimata was amazed. Tears rolled down her cheeks, as she cuddled the baby Ghanashyam in her arms.

STUDY:

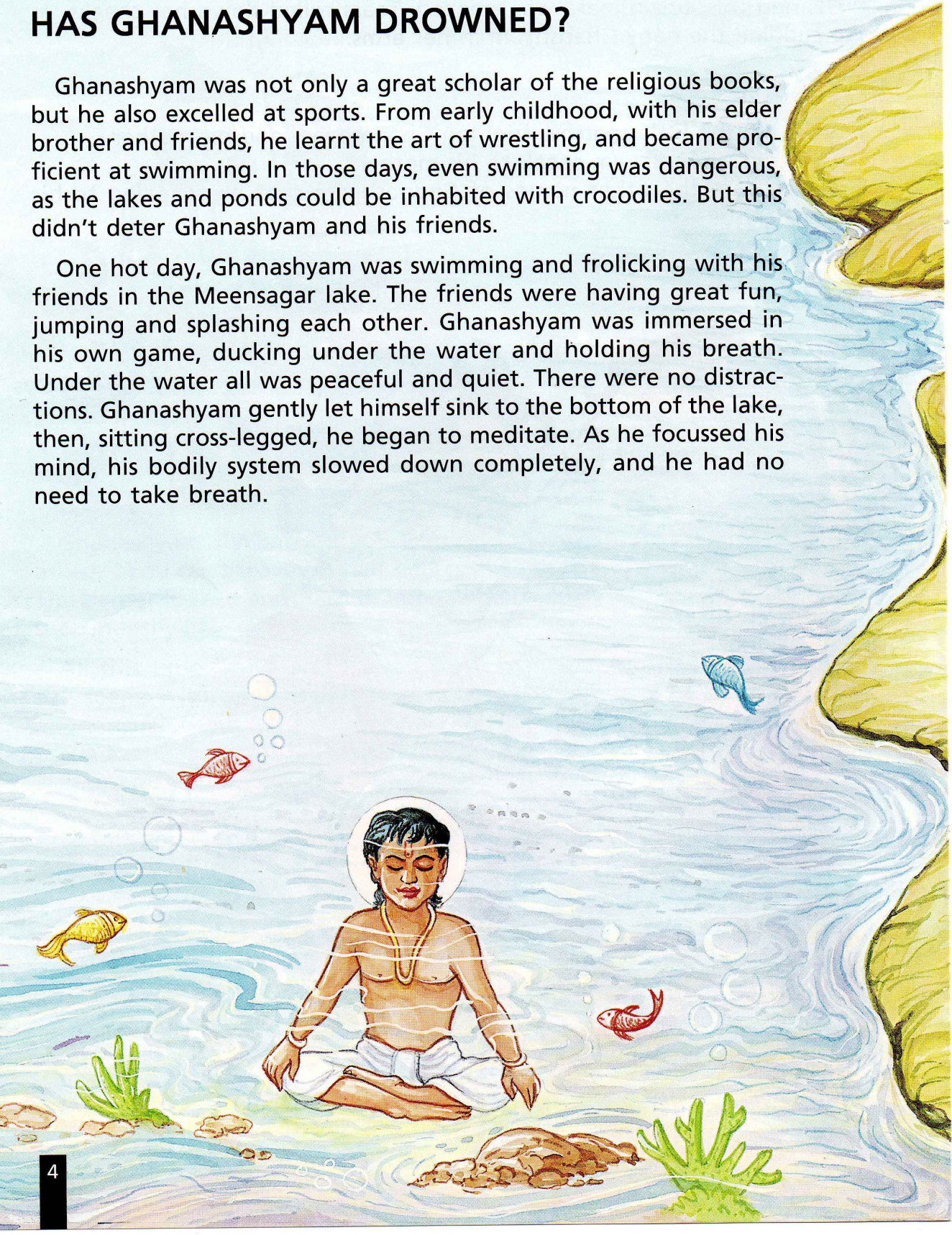
1. How did the little sparrow frighten Ghanashyam and his mother.
2. How did Ghanashyam speak to his mother?
3. What were the other names of Ghanashyam that he revealed to his mother?



HAS GHANASHYAM DROWNED?

Ghanashyam was not only a great scholar of the religious books, but he also excelled at sports. From early childhood, with his elder brother and friends, he learnt the art of wrestling, and became proficient at swimming. In those days, even swimming was dangerous, as the lakes and ponds could be inhabited with crocodiles. But this didn't deter Ghanashyam and his friends.

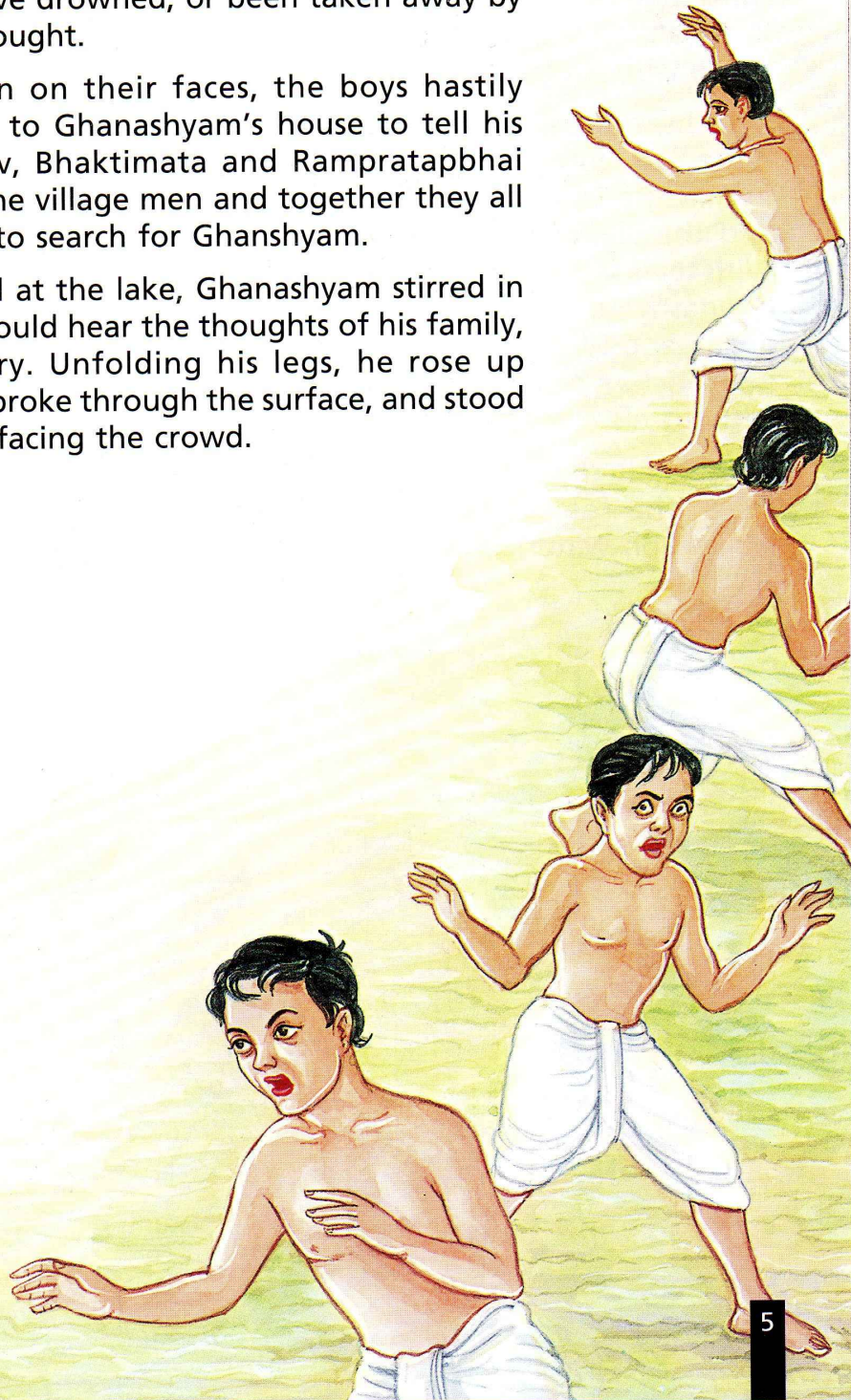
One hot day, Ghanashyam was swimming and frolicking with his friends in the Meensagar lake. The friends were having great fun, jumping and splashing each other. Ghanashyam was immersed in his own game, ducking under the water and holding his breath. Under the water all was peaceful and quiet. There were no distractions. Ghanashyam gently let himself sink to the bottom of the lake, then, sitting cross-legged, he began to meditate. As he focussed his mind, his bodily system slowed down completely, and he had no need to take breath.

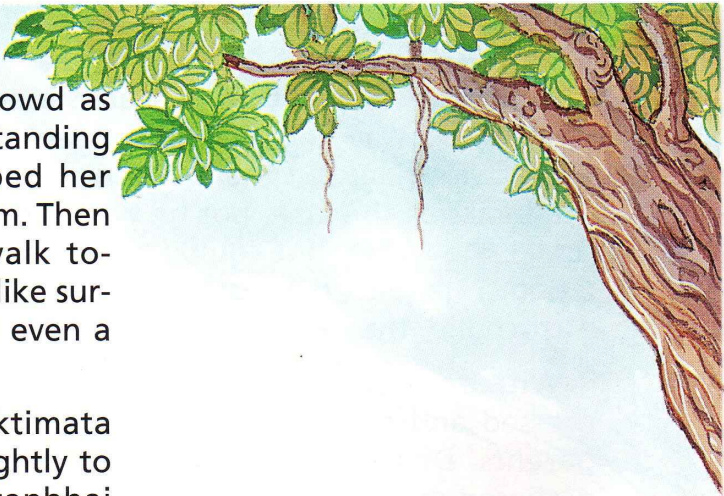


Up on the surface, Ghanashyam's friends looked round for him. He was no where to be seen. They began calling out for him, but there was no reply. They looked on the banks of the lake, but he was not there. They dived under the water, but couldn't see him. They were all in a panic, He must have drowned, or been taken away by a crocodile, they thought.

With fear written on their faces, the boys hastily dressed and rushed to Ghanashyam's house to tell his parents. Dharmadev, Bhaktimata and Rampratapbhai gathered many of the village men and together they all hurried to the lake to search for Ghanashyam.

As they all arrived at the lake, Ghanashyam stirred in his meditation. He could hear the thoughts of his family, and feel their worry. Unfolding his legs, he rose up through the water, broke through the surface, and stood there on the water facing the crowd.

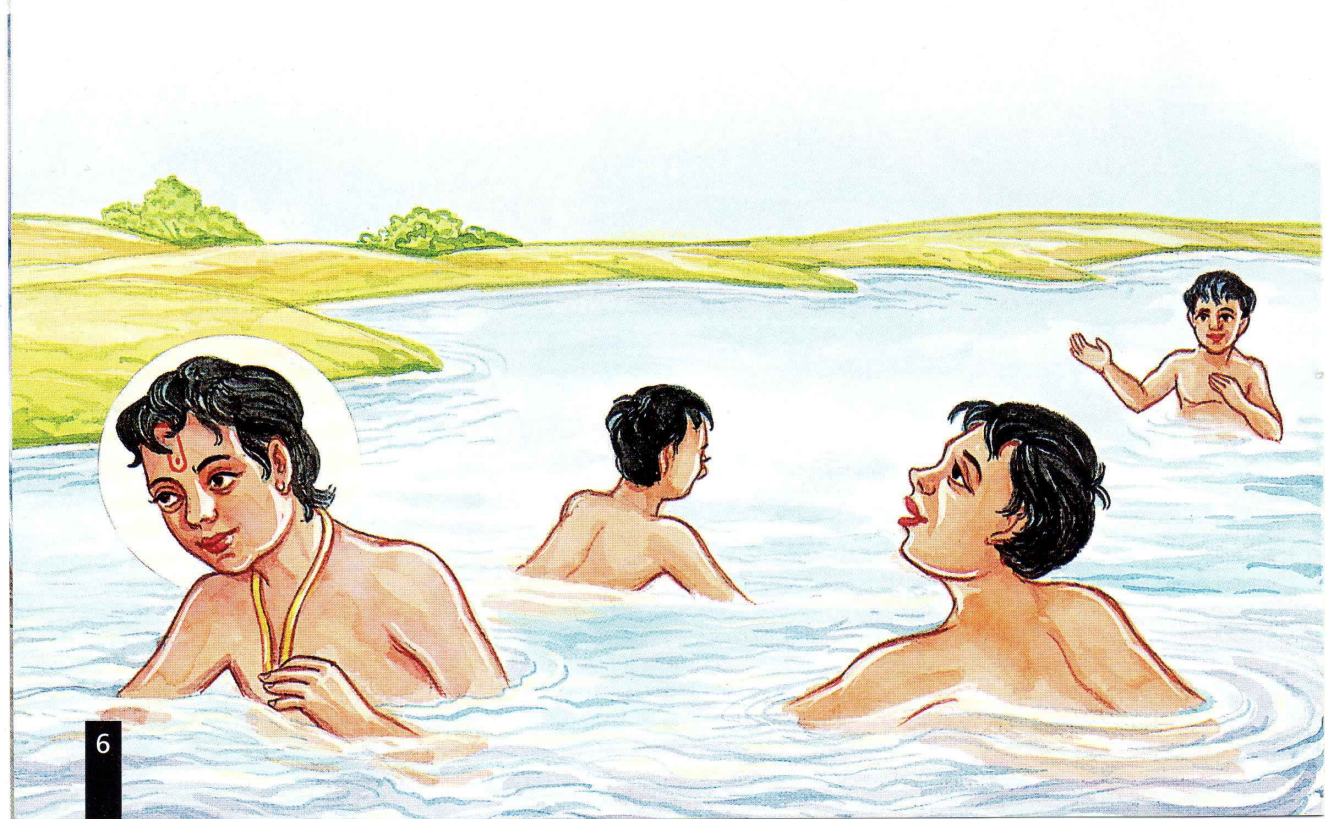




There was a gasp from the crowd as they saw Ghanashyam appear, standing on the water. Bhaktimata clasped her hands in relief and called out to him. Then slowly Ghanashyam began to walk toward them, stepping on the glass-like surface of the lake, but not creating even a ripple with his feet!

As he reached the shore, Bhaktimata rushed to him and clasped him tightly to her, while Dharmadev, Rampratapbhai and the village people crowded round. With tears in her eyes Bhaktimata begged Ghanashyam not to frighten her like that again, and Dharmadev extracted a promise from him never to go swimming again without his elder brother.

Then all the village people came to touch the feet of the young lord who walked on water.





STUDY:

1. What were the sports that Ghanashyam was good at?
2. What was the name of the lake where Ghanashyam and his friends were swimming?
3. What was Ghanashyam doing at the bottom of the lake?
4. Fill in the blank.
"Ghanashyam's friends thought he might have been eaten by a _____".
5. Sitting under the water, how did Ghanashyam know his parents were worried about him?
6. What was the miracle that Ghanashyam performed?





LORD OF LIGHT

One day, Dharmadev and Rampratapbhai were sitting on the swing in the shade of the verandah. Bhaktimata was sitting nearby in the doorway, with the baby Ghanashyam in her lap. She was playing happily with him, tickling him on his little tummy. Each time she tickoo

led him, Ghanashyam would shriek and gurgle with laughter. He was laughing and enjoying himself so much that Dharmadev became worried, and he told Bhaktimata not to tickle him so much.

At that moment, a bright light emerged from Ghanashyam's navel, just where Bhaktimata was tickling him. The light spread brightly and rapidly in all directions, seeming to light up the whole world. Then from the light emerged the figures of Chaturbuj and Bhumapurush. Greeting Dharmadev and his family, they said they had a message from God.

"When the life of the universe is half over, then God will come and take birth in your house. That time is now here, and Purushottam has indeed taken birth as your child Ghanashyam. It is the Lord God that is laughing and playing in Bhaktimata's lap"

Then the light, and the heavenly messengers disappeared, leaving the family filled with wonder.

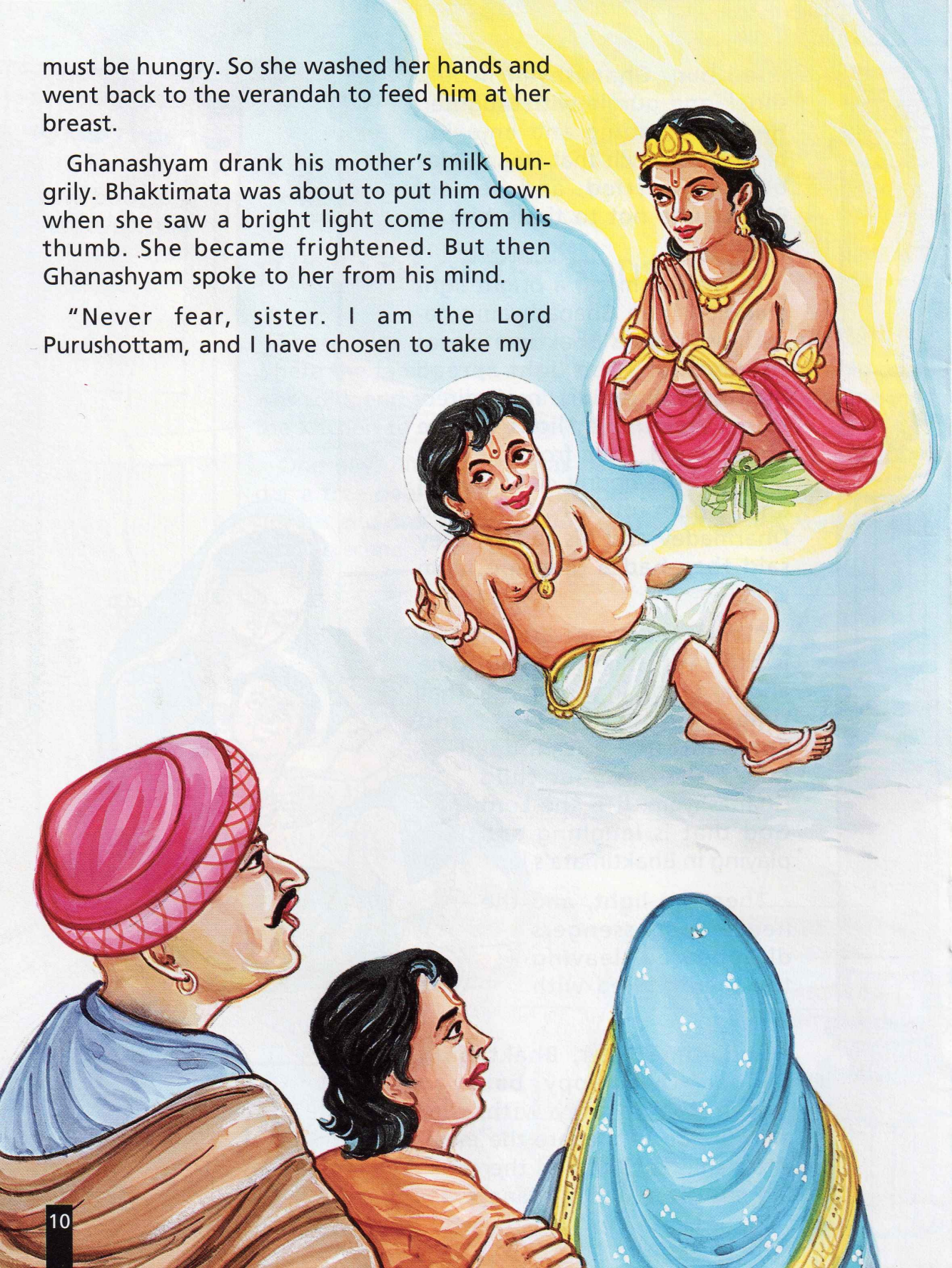
Sometime later, Bhaktimata handed the happy baby to Rampratap to play with, and went inside to prepare the meal. After she had finished the cooking, she realised that Ghanashyam



must be hungry. So she washed her hands and went back to the verandah to feed him at her breast.

Ghanashyam drank his mother's milk hungrily. Bhaktimata was about to put him down when she saw a bright light come from his thumb. She became frightened. But then Ghanashyam spoke to her from his mind.

"Never fear, sister. I am the Lord Purushottam, and I have chosen to take my



earthly birth from you. In your previous life you devoted yourself to me, as if I was your son. So now indeed I am your son, and it is I who you daily feed and play with as a small baby”

Bhaktimata was overjoyed to know that God was her own child, and every day her love and devotion for him increased.



STUDY:

1. What were the two parts of Ghanashyam's body where the light came from?
2. What was Bhaktimata doing to Ghanashyam when the light came from his navel?
3. Who were the two heavenly messengers who appeared in the light?
4. Fill in the blank. " Lord _____ came to earth in the form of Ghanshyam."
5. Why did God choose Bhaktimata to take his birth from?

THE TWELVE MOTHERS OF GHANASHYAM



Bhaktimata had a very high temperature, and was burning with fever. She lay on her bed, trying to sleep. Nearby was her baby Ghanashyam, lying in his cradle.

Suddenly Ghanashyam woke. He was very hungry, and began crying loudly for his mother. Bhaktimata looked over at him. She called feebly to him. 'Sleep, my little one. Today your mother is not well.' But Ghanashyam continued to cry in hunger. So, Bhaktimata painfully got up from her bed and went to the child. Gently taking Ghanashyam from his cradle, she put him to her breast to feed. But she was so ill that no milk came. Ghanashyam was still crying, so she put him back and, lying on the floor beside the cradle she began to rock it gently, hoping he would go to sleep. But Ghanashyam's crying continued.

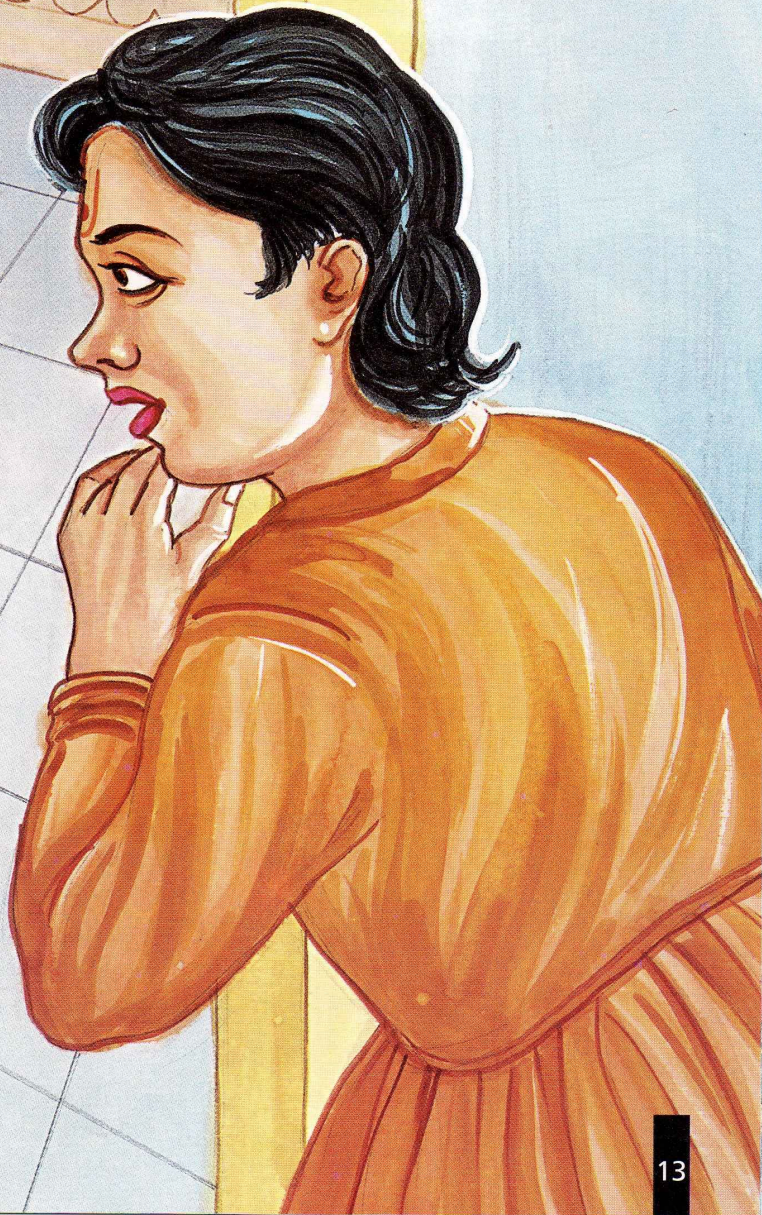
Exhausted by the fever, Bhaktimata fell asleep beside the cradle. Ghanashyam cried louder and louder. Hearing the baby's cries, Rampratapbhai came into the room to see what was happening. Seeing his sick mother asleep on the floor, he began to rock the cradle, trying to calm the baby. "Your mother is not here now, so you had better sleep." he said.

The rocking of the cradle, and the sound of his brother's voice, seemed to calm Ghanashyam. Then Rampratapbhai got up, and headed off for the lake to take a bath. No sooner had he gone, than Ghanashyam realised he had been left alone, and again he began to cry loudly in hunger.

So loud were Ghanashyam's cries, that they reached to the heavens. There, they were heard by the twelve heavenly angels. Taking pity on the hungry baby, and realising that Bhaktimata was too ill to feed him, they immediately came and appeared before the cradle.

One of the heavenly beings, Shrada, gently took the baby Ghanashyam from his cradle, and held him to her breast to feed him, speaking softly. "Never fear, my little Lord. You will not go hungry. See, here are your twelve mothers to feed you." And one by one, the twelve heavenly women all took turns in feeding the little child. Soon he was so full and happy with the heavenly milk, that Ghanashyam fell asleep. Shrada took him in her lap, rocking him gently.

It was then that Dharmadev returned home. He was shocked to see the scene. There were the twelve women, one of them holding the baby Ghanashyam, and there was his wife asleep on the floor! He went to her, and roused her gently. As she woke




and opened her eyes and saw the twelve women, she thought she must be dreaming!

Then the twelve women stood up, and Shrada gently placed the sleeping Ghanashyam back in his cradle. Turning to Bhaktimata and Dharmadev, the twelve women folded their hands and bowed their heads. Then turning, they filed out through the door, heading towards the lake.



Dharmadev was astonished. He turned to Bhaktimata and asked, "Who were all those women? I didn't realise Ghanashyam had so many aunties!" Bhaktimata replied that she didn't know who they were. "They were wearing such fine clothes and rich jewelry. They cannot be his aunts." she said. Then she looked at the baby Ghanashyam, asleep in his cradle.

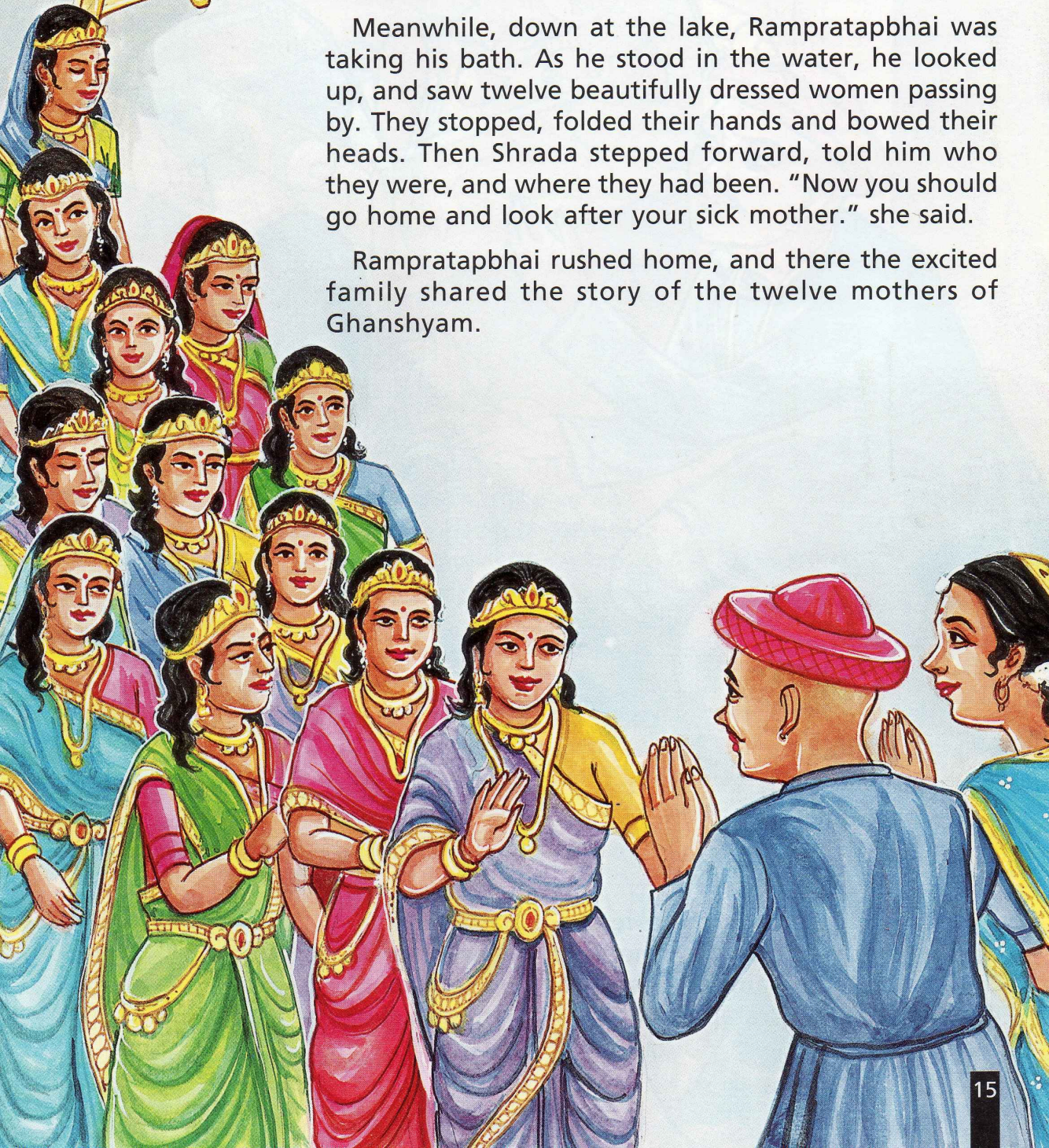


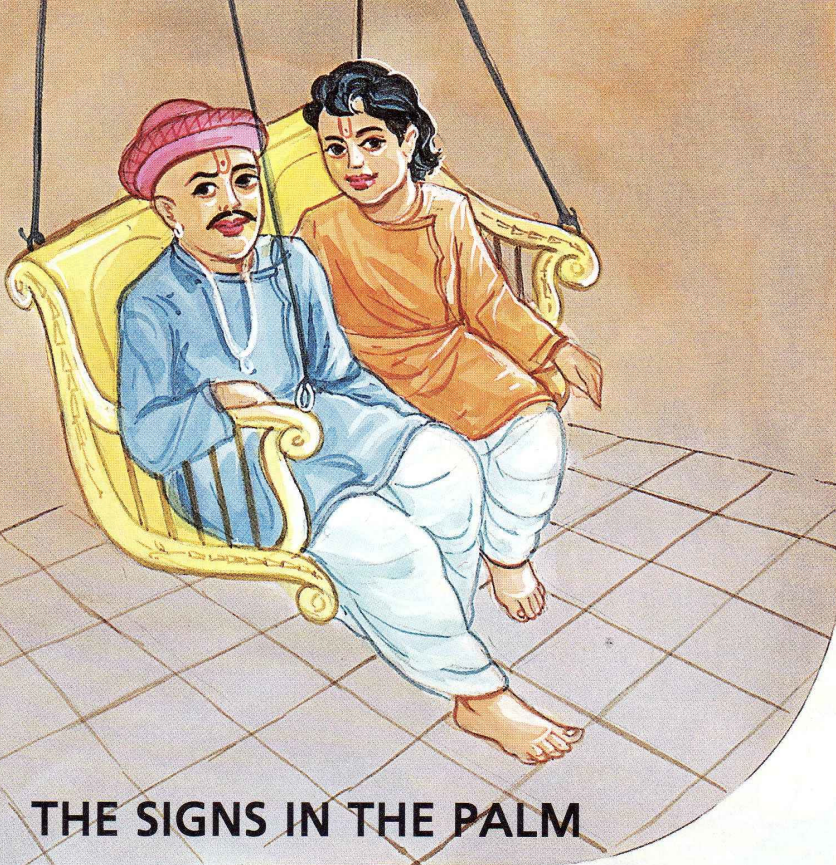
She could see his little stomach, full with milk.

Smiling gently at him, she wondered who the women were. The Ghanashyam opened his eyes, and speaking with his mind he told her. "I was hungry, and you were too ill to feed me. So I called on my twelve heavenly mothers to come and feed me."

Meanwhile, down at the lake, Rampratapbhai was taking his bath. As he stood in the water, he looked up, and saw twelve beautifully dressed women passing by. They stopped, folded their hands and bowed their heads. Then Shrada stepped forward, told him who they were, and where they had been. "Now you should go home and look after your sick mother." she said.

Rampratapbhai rushed home, and there the excited family shared the story of the twelve mothers of Ghanshyam.





THE SIGNS IN THE PALM

Dharmadev was sitting with his son Rampratap on the swinging seat on the verandah. Nearby, Bhaktimata was seated on the floor, cradling the baby Ghanashyam in her lap. She was holding his right hand, looking into his palm, trying to read the signs in it. There were some strange marks which she couldn't understand. She called Dharmadev over to have a look.

Dharmadev looked closely at the marks on Ghanashyam's palm. "See, there is a lotus" he said, "And there is a flag symbol. And that one there is an Ankush."

As they both gazed at the symbols in Ghanashyam's





STUDY:

1. Why couldn't Bhaktimata feed Ghanashyam?
2. How many heavenly mothers did Ghanashyam have?
3. What was the name of one of the twelve angels?
4. What was Ramprataphai doing when he saw the twelve women?



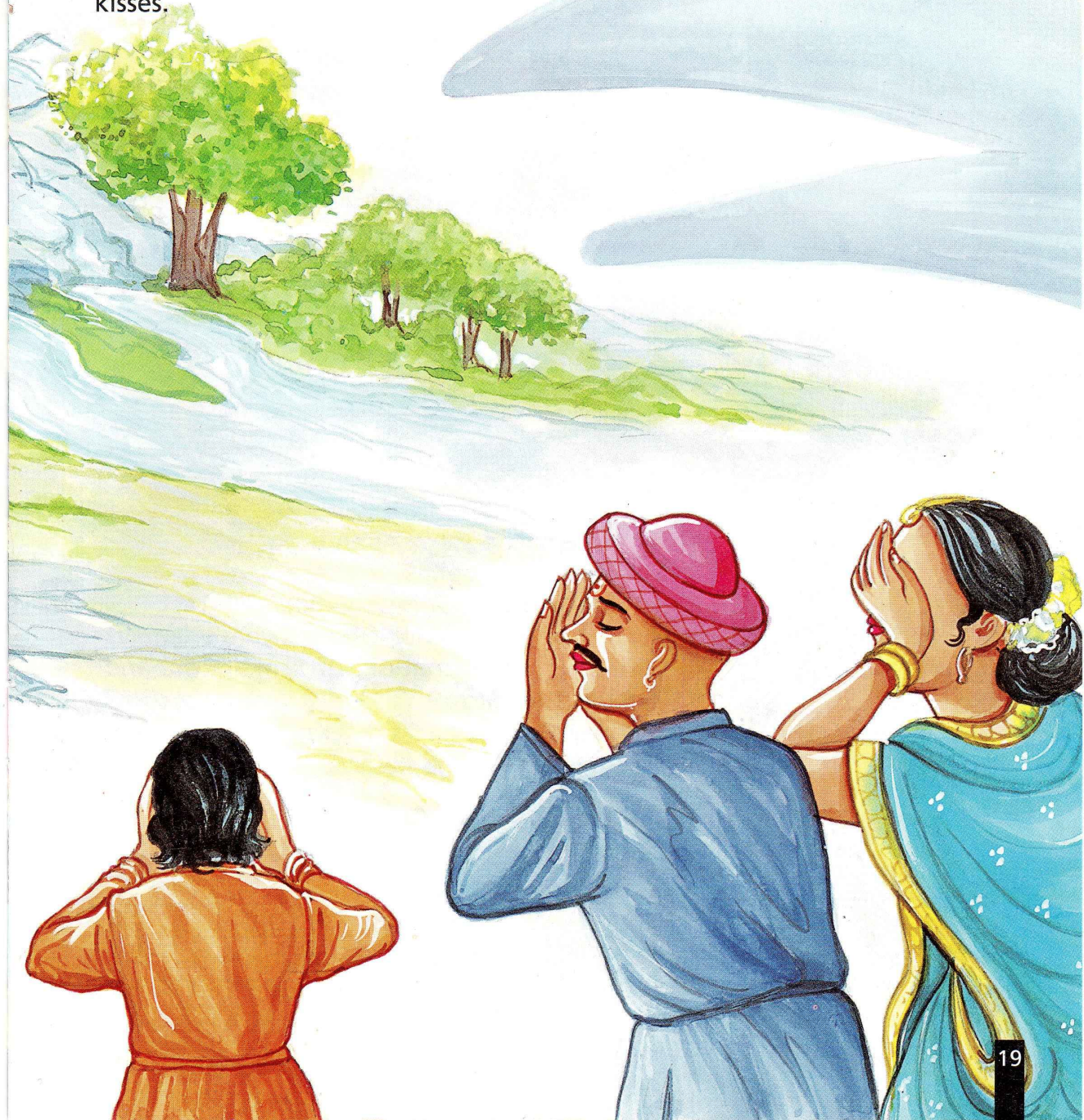
palm, a bright light began to emerge from the baby's hand. It grew brighter and brighter, lighting up the verandah, then lighting up the surrounding trees. Finally it was so bright that it lit up all the earth and the sky. So bright it was, that it blinded Dharmadev, Bhaktimata and Rampratap, and they shielded their eyes with their hands.

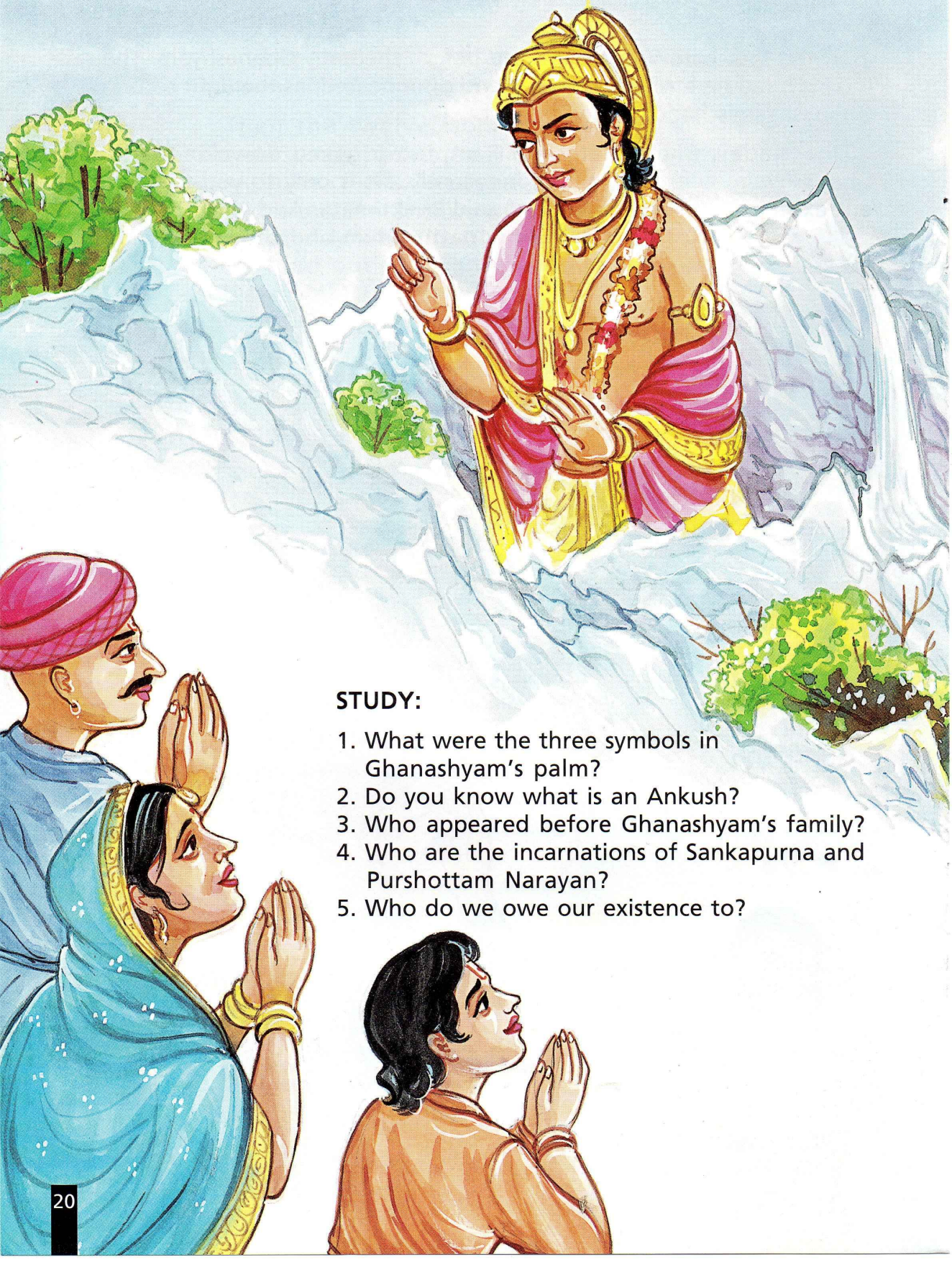
When they lowered their hands and opened their eyes, they were amazed to see a wonderful vision. There was Lord Vasudev, seated on a white island! Immediately they folded their hands and began to pray to him.

Then Lord Vasudev looked at Rampratap, and spoke to him. "These are your parents, Dharma and Bhakti. And in reality you are the incarnation of Sankarashan. And your baby brother Ghanashyam is Purshottam Narayan. It is He who has taken birth within your home, to bring enlightenment to the millions of people on earth."

Saying this, Lord Vasudev bowed before the baby Ghanashyam. The raising his hand he blessed the child, and disappeared, as the light returned to Ghanashyam's hand, and went out.

Dharmadev, Bhaktimata and Rampratap gazed down in wonder at Ghanashyam, who was smiling innocently. "It is only to you that we owe our existence and our happiness" said Bhaktimata. And all three began to make a great fuss over the baby, patting him and showering him with kisses.





STUDY:

1. What were the three symbols in Ghanashyam's palm?
2. Do you know what is an Ankush?
3. Who appeared before Ghanashyam's family?
4. Who are the incarnations of Sankapurna and Purshottam Narayan?
5. Who do we owe our existence to?

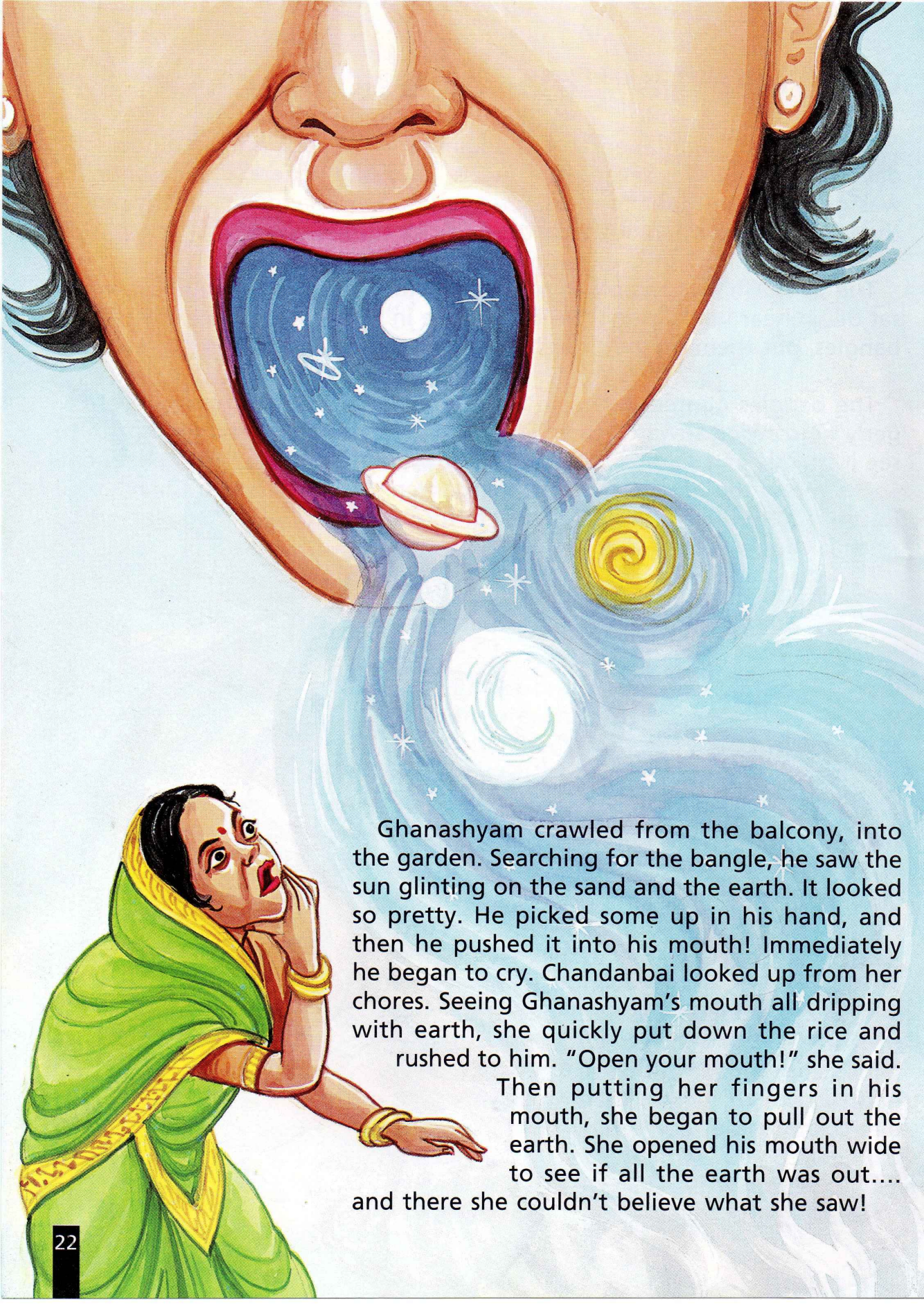
OPEN YOUR MOUTH!

Bhaktimata, Vasantaben and Chandanbai were cooking the dinner one day. Bhaktimata was setting the fire to cook the vegetables, Vasantaben was grinding the flour to make chappaties, and Chandanbai went out to the verandah, to clean out the dust particles from the rice.

The little Ghanashyam was playing on the verandah, and Chandanbai sat down near him. Setting the dish of rice in front of her, she took off her bangles, put them on the floor beside her, and set to work.

The bangles glinted in the sunlight, and caught Ghanashyam's eye. Eagerly he crawled towards them. Then he picked one up, and held it up to see it sparkle and shine. But Ghanashyam wanted to play with Chandanbai. So he threw the bangle out into the garden, and then asked Chandanbai to fetch it for him. "Can't you see, I'm too busy." she said. "You'll have to fetch it yourself."





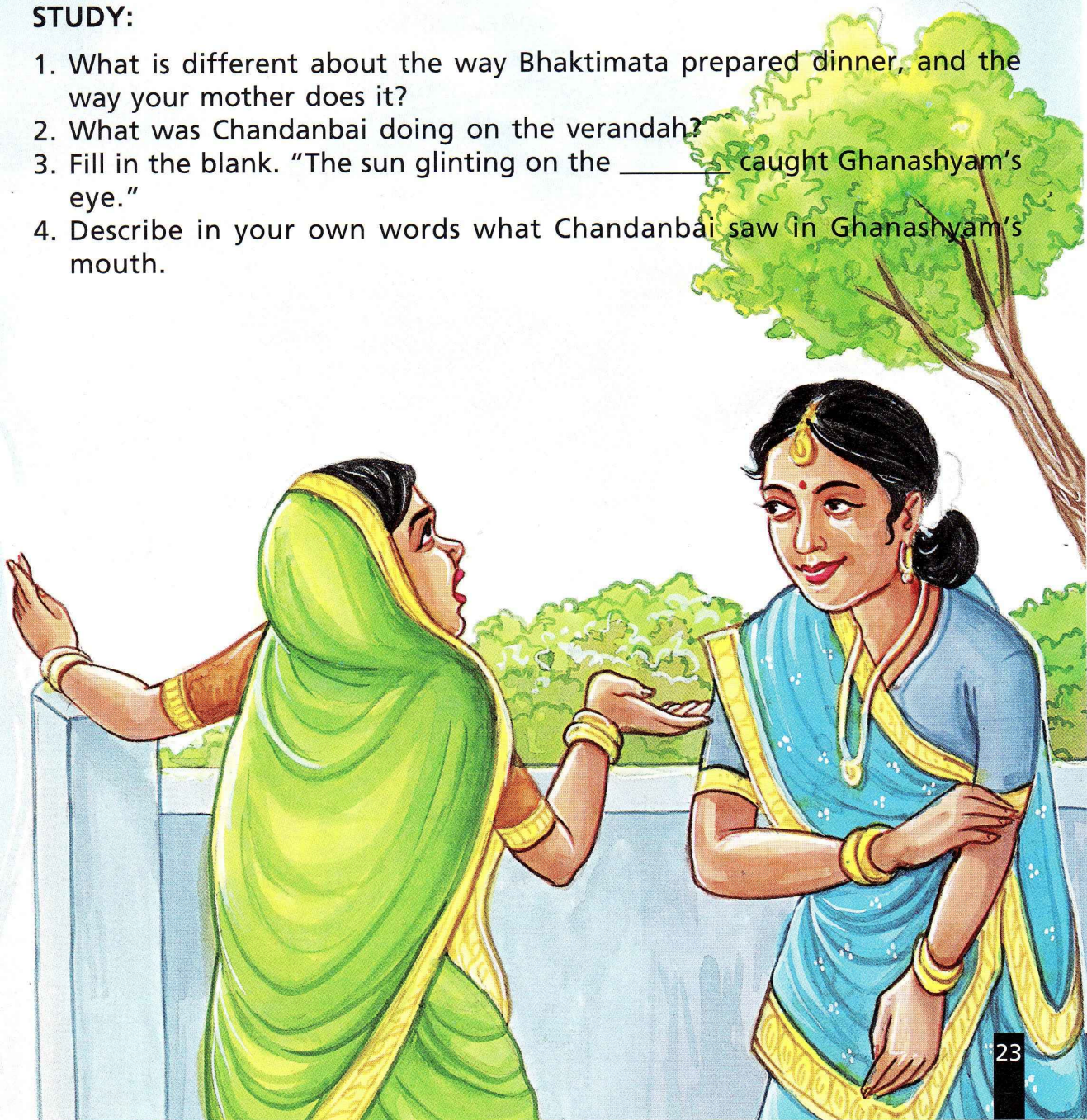
Ghanashyam crawled from the balcony, into the garden. Searching for the bangle, he saw the sun glinting on the sand and the earth. It looked so pretty. He picked some up in his hand, and then he pushed it into his mouth! Immediately he began to cry. Chandanbai looked up from her chores. Seeing Ghanashyam's mouth all dripping with earth, she quickly put down the rice and rushed to him. "Open your mouth!" she said. Then putting her fingers in his mouth, she began to pull out the earth. She opened his mouth wide to see if all the earth was out.... and there she couldn't believe what she saw!

As she gazed into Ghanashyam's mouth she saw the world, with the heavens and stars swirling about it. She saw mountains, rivers and oceans. She saw forests, and all kinds of animals and spirits. It was as if the whole Universe was inside Ghanashyam! Then Ghanashyam closed his mouth, and smiled sweetly at her.

Chandanbai rushed inside the house, and excitedly told Bhaktimata what she had seen. Bhaktimata just smiled, for she too had seen a similar vision in Ghanashyam's mouth when he was a tiny baby.

STUDY:

1. What is different about the way Bhaktimata prepared dinner, and the way your mother does it?
2. What was Chandanbai doing on the verandah?
3. Fill in the blank. "The sun glinting on the _____ caught Ghanashyam's eye."
4. Describe in your own words what Chandanbai saw in Ghanashyam's mouth.





THE BATH OF THE GODS

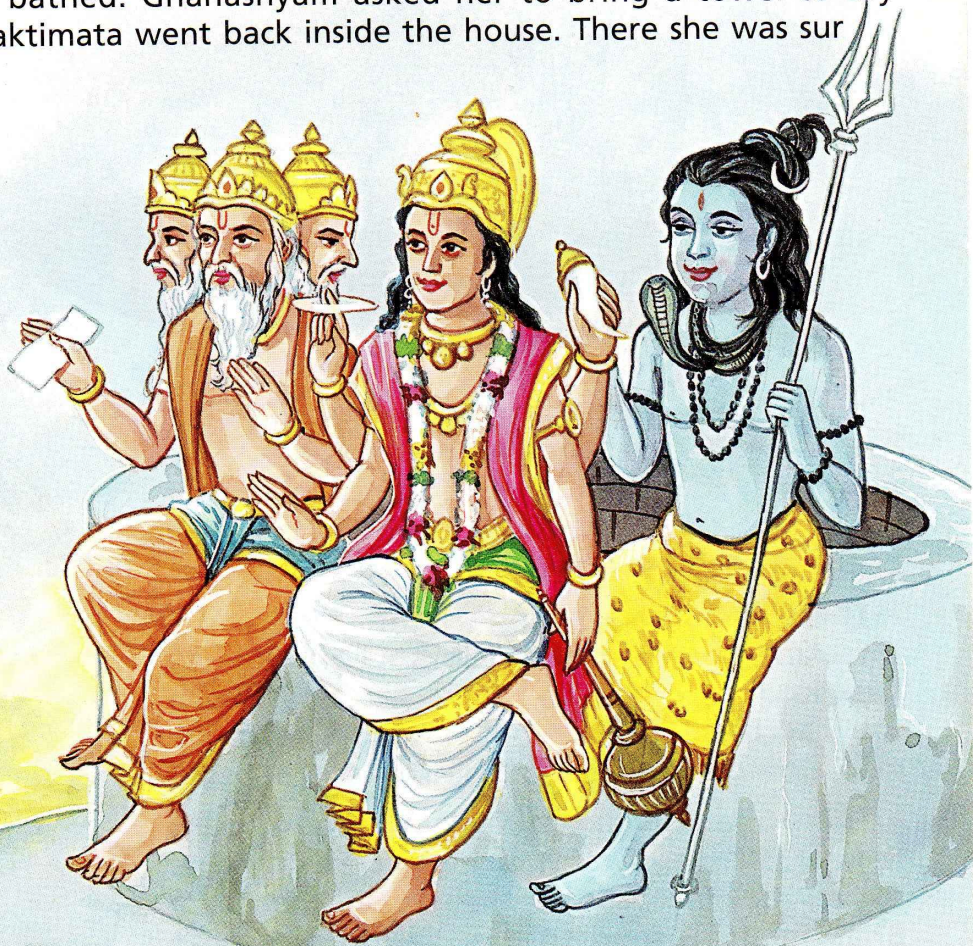
There was a well near the house of Dharmadev, where the family used to take bath. In winter the water was cold, and so Bhaktimata would heat some water in the kitchen to mix with the cold water.

One day, Bhaktimata was bathing her little son under a tree near the well. Invisible to her eyes, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva were sitting on the well wall, watching the scene.

Bhaktimata mixed the hot water with the cold in a bucket, and began to bathe Ghanashyam. But the water was too hot, and Ghanashyam yelled, as if in pain. Bhaktimata soothed him, and then went quickly to the house to get some more cold water

Suddenly, Brahma Vishnu and Shiva appeared, and came down from the wall of the well. Bowing before Ghanashyam, they gently began to bathe him. All three gods were so happy to be of service to their Lord, and thanked Ghanashyam for the chance to be so close to him. Just then they heard Bhaktimata coming out of the house. Quickly they resumed their invisible form so she would not see them.

When Bhaktimata came back she was surprised to see her child standing up and already bathed. Ghanashyam asked her to bring a towel to dry himself, and Bhaktimata went back inside the house. There she was sur



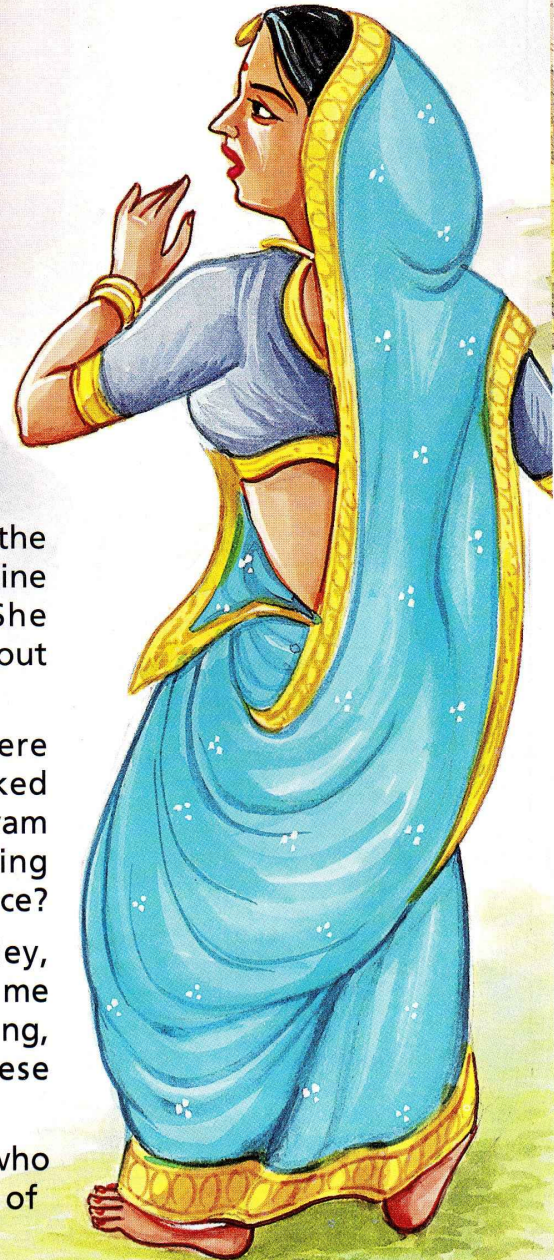


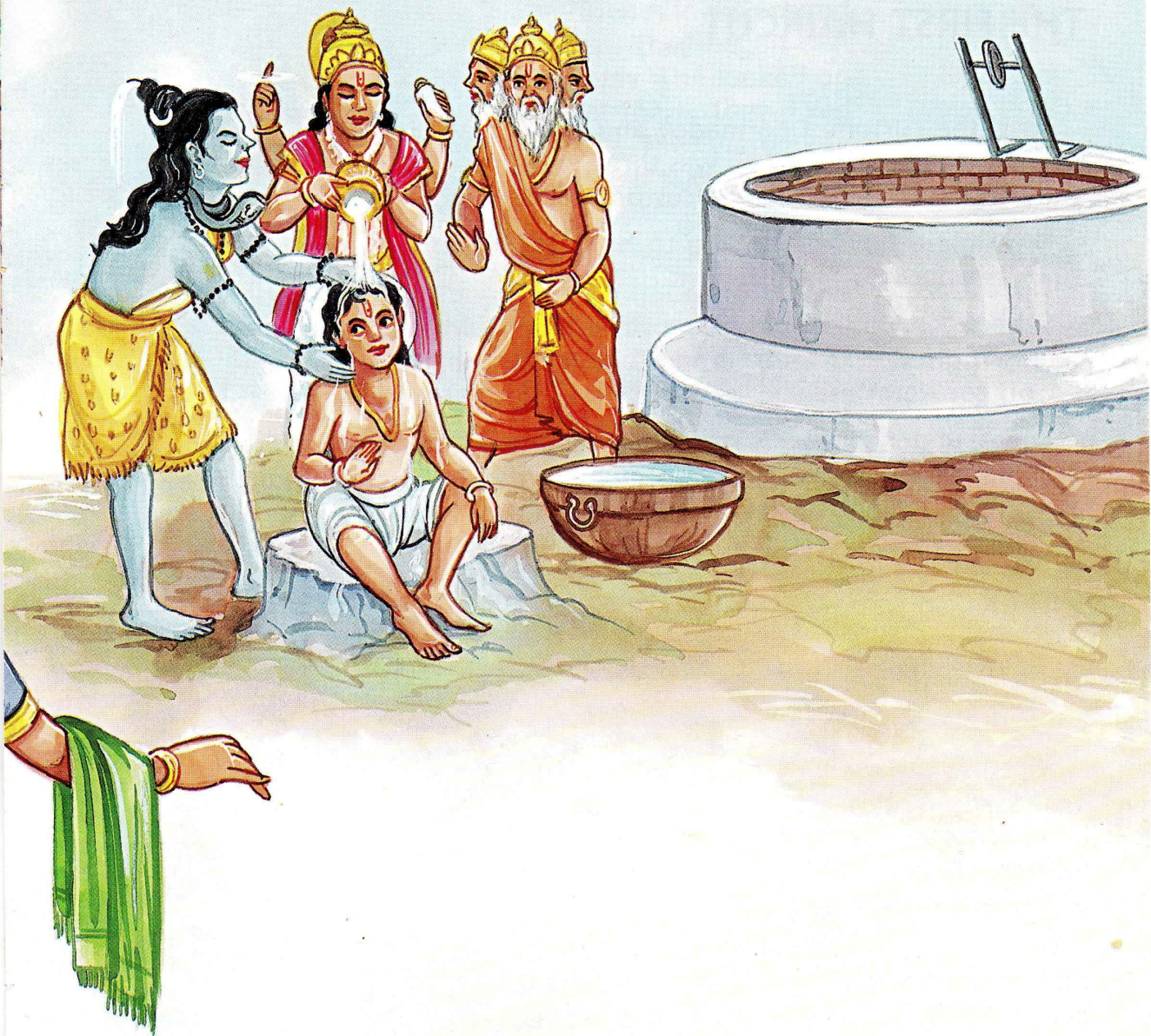
prised to see that Ghanashyam was inside the house, and completely dressed and wearing fine jewelry! She couldn't believe her eyes. She thought she must be dreaming. So she came out of the house once again.

There she saw a strange sight. There were three men bathing her little boy! She looked back into the house, and there was Ghanashyam fully clothed! She thought she must be going mad. How could her son be in two places at once?

Then Ghanashyam called out to her. "Hey, Mother. Why are you standing there? Bring me the towel." Relieved that she was not dreaming, Bhaktimata rushed to him. "Who are these men?" she asked.

Then it was that the gods told Bhaktimata who they were. "Your son is the Lord and creator of





all things," they said, " and we just wanted to be near him." And then they rose up and disappeared into the sky.

STUDY:

1. When Ghanashyam was a little boy, where did he take his bath?
2. Name the three gods who were sitting on the wall of the well.
3. Fill in the blank. "Bhaktimata was confused, as Ghanashyam was in ____ places at the same time."
4. Draw a picture of a well and a tree.

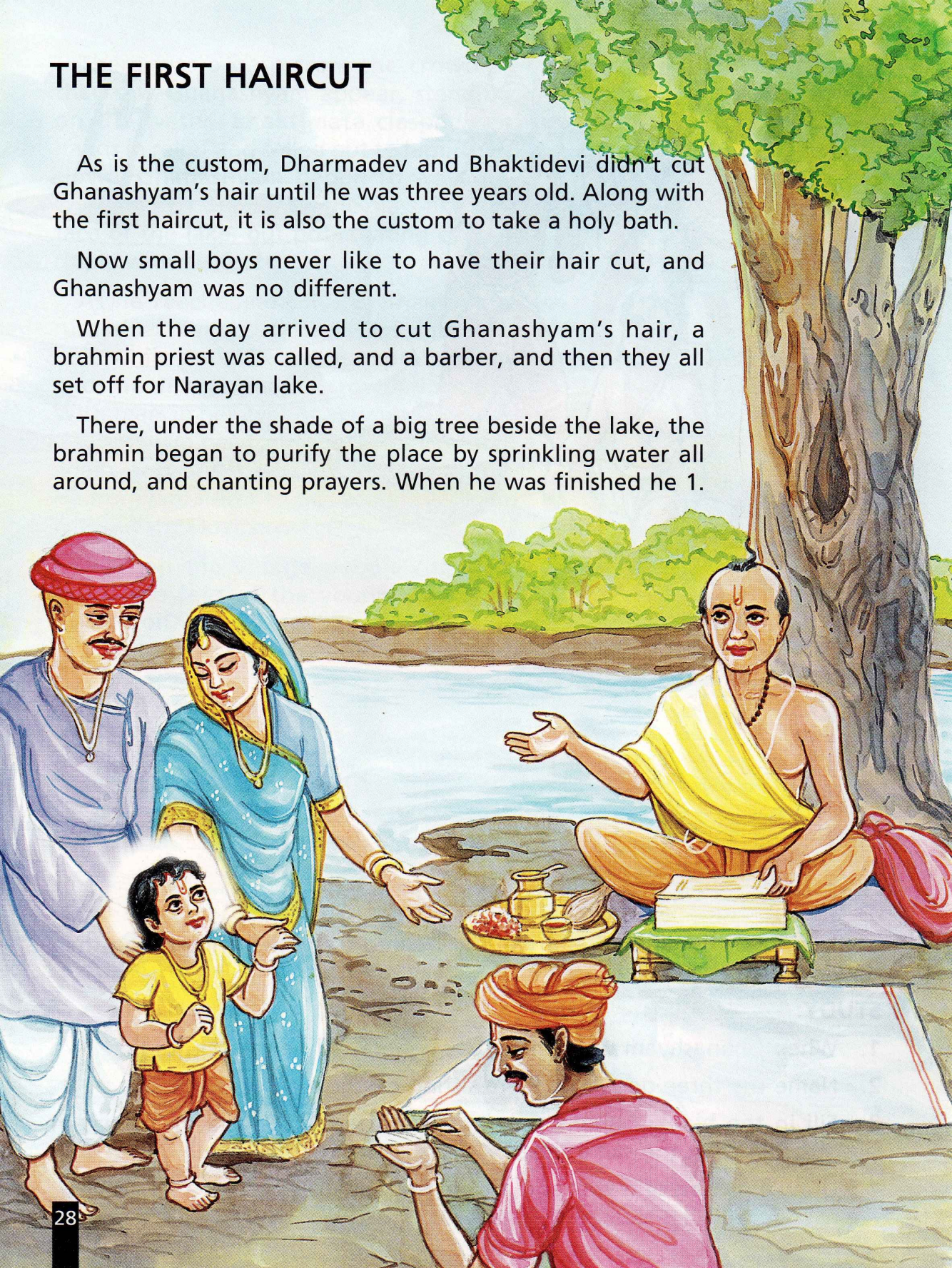
THE FIRST HAIRCUT

As is the custom, Dharmadev and Bhaktidevi didn't cut Ghanashyam's hair until he was three years old. Along with the first haircut, it is also the custom to take a holy bath.

Now small boys never like to have their hair cut, and Ghanashyam was no different.

When the day arrived to cut Ghanashyam's hair, a brahmin priest was called, and a barber, and then they all set off for Narayan lake.

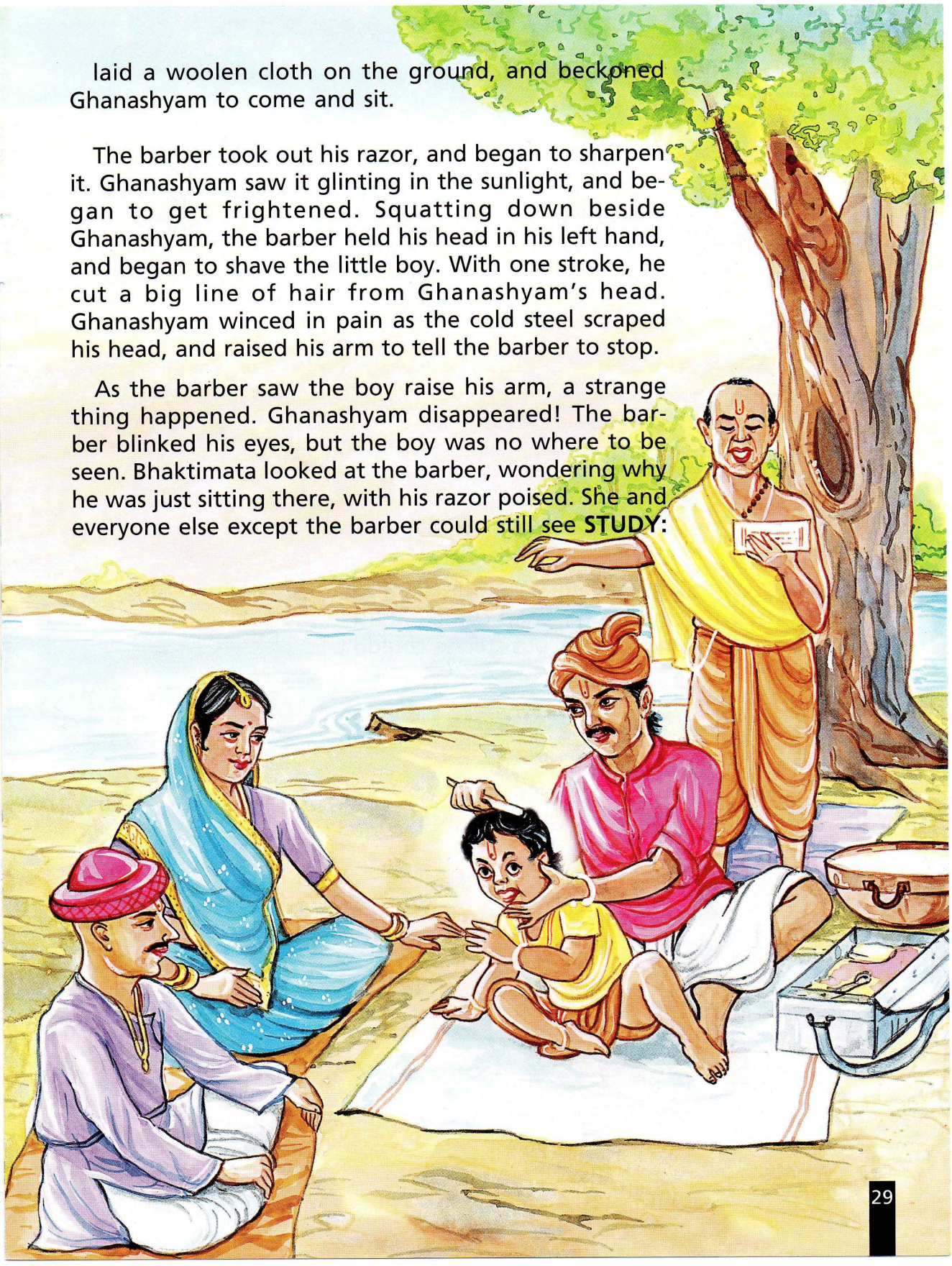
There, under the shade of a big tree beside the lake, the brahmin began to purify the place by sprinkling water all around, and chanting prayers. When he was finished he 1.



laid a woolen cloth on the ground, and beckoned Ghanashyam to come and sit.

The barber took out his razor, and began to sharpen it. Ghanashyam saw it glinting in the sunlight, and began to get frightened. Squatting down beside Ghanashyam, the barber held his head in his left hand, and began to shave the little boy. With one stroke, he cut a big line of hair from Ghanashyam's head. Ghanashyam winced in pain as the cold steel scraped his head, and raised his arm to tell the barber to stop.

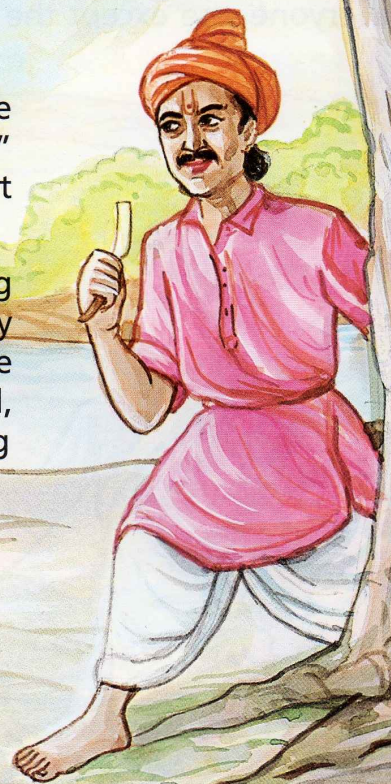
As the barber saw the boy raise his arm, a strange thing happened. Ghanashyam disappeared! The barber blinked his eyes, but the boy was no where to be seen. Bhaktimata looked at the barber, wondering why he was just sitting there, with his razor poised. She and everyone else except the barber could still see **STUDY:**





Ghanashyam. "What are you waiting for?" she asked, "You can't leave his hair half cut like that!" The barber looked and looked, but still he couldn't see Ghanashyam.

All this time, Shiva and Parvati were watching the scene with amusement from their heavenly abode. Taking pity on the poor barber, they came down to the shores of the lake, riding on their bull, Nandi, and appeared before Ghanashyam. Bowing



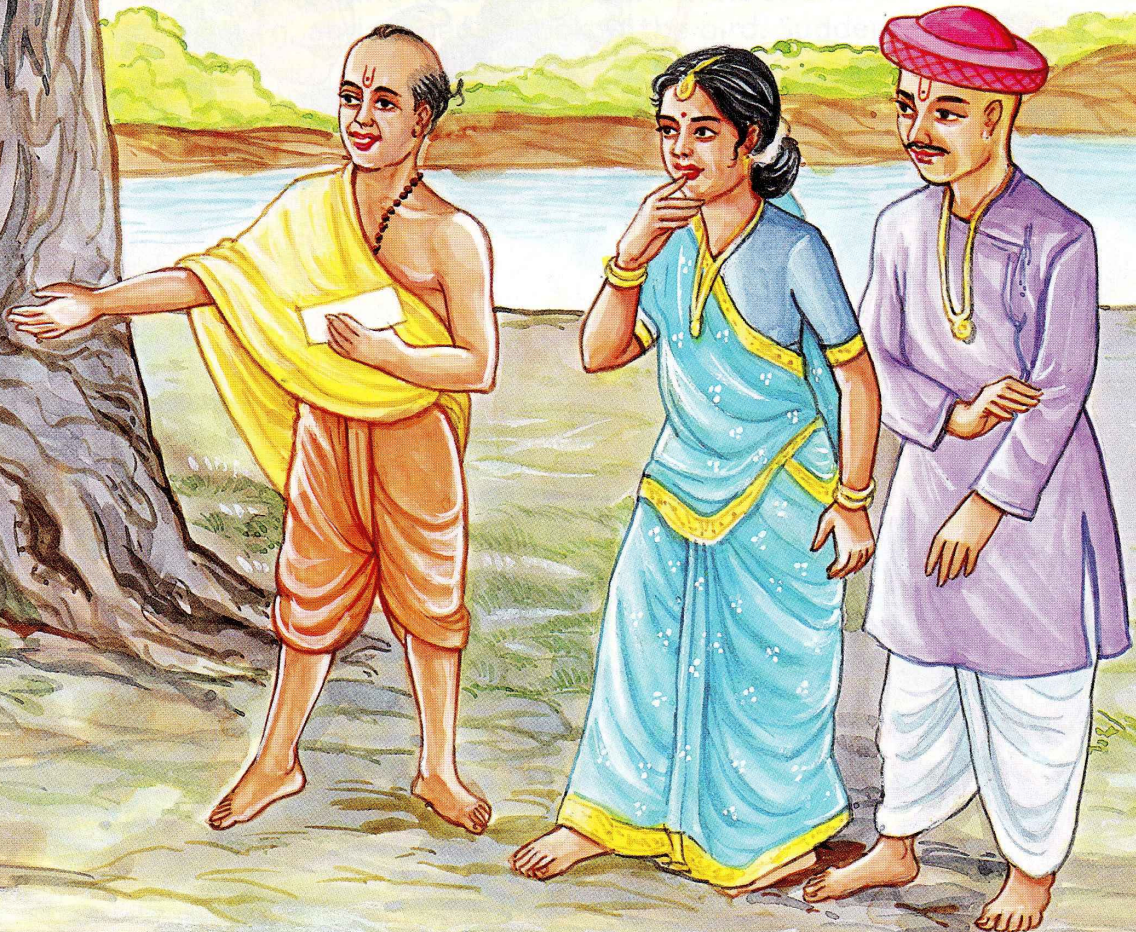
his head before Ghanashyam, Shiva spoke to him with love. "Why are you teasing this poor man, my little lord? He is only doing his job." he said. "But it hurts!" said Ghanashyam.

Shiva fixed him with his eye. "You are the lord of all things," he said, "And you will only feel pain if you want to. If you don't want to feel pain, then there will be no pain."

Ghanashyam smiled and nodded his head in understanding. Raising his hand in blessing on the little boy, Shiva, left for his heavenly abode along with Parvati and Nandi.

Suddenly Ghanashyam made himself visible again to the barber. "What are you waiting for?" he asked the surprised man, "Cut it all off!"

And so it was that Ghanashyam had his first haircut.



At what age did you have your first haircut? Can you remember?

2. Complete the sentence. "Ghanashyam had his first haircut at the age of _____."
3. Who came down from the heavens to see Ghanashyam?
4. What were they riding on?
5. What was the name of the lake where Ghanashyam had his first haircut?



