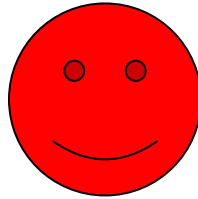


SOME PURANA STORIES

(Hindu Mythological Stories)

Compiled by A.C.Sekhar



Contents

Introduction
Bhishma
Parikshit
Pahlada
Dhruv
Krishna
Royals of Ayodhya
Drona
Vibhishana

Introduction:

Stories interest all sections of people, the young and old, men and women, rich and poor, educated or not, The story telling also is an art that attracts people of all types .Some grand-parents and traditional story tellers seem to have specialized in this art. Whether the stories are true stories or only made up stories, they generally start with some ordinary facts of life and end in surprises and admiration which cause some sort of entertainment in the minds of listeners in the end. Hence stories attract patient hearing with an element of curiosity. There are several types of stories and parables found in the literatures of the world. The stories of the West generally send messages of adventure, travel, bravery and facing dangers with some sort of weaponry and scientific tools. The stories of Europe and Middle East generally touch upon social events, kings and queens, legendary events travelers etc. Most of the Eastern stories talk about several miracles of life, supernatural powers, and sometimes divine influences. While all such stories and the styles of their narration may have conveniently suited people of the world of past generations, it looks most of the present generation particularly the children, do not consider them realistic. They require different types of stories and different type of narration in view of their interaction with the present day world of multi-polar societies, diverse socio-religious cultures, rapid technological advances etc .The present day children with all their contacts with the new communication systems have a tendency to probe into the validity of events in a story and check for themselves the values of such stories. In my view they need to understand and appreciate the integral whole of human existence involving both the material and spiritual aspects of life covering the various events in the story told to them. They should be able to see not only some sort of unity in the diversity of life but also see a balance of the real and the abstract, a balance between materialism and spiritualism of the present day world. With this view, it appears that the narration of stories whether old or new, whether of the East or West, should take a pattern different from the conventional grand-parents style. The stories of the present series are told with the above background

I feel that every story for a child has three aspects or functions.; the function of a mother, the function of a father, and the function of a teacher. The mother after giving birth to a child nourishes the child carefully, allows the child to reach accesses to various areas of development. So also the narration of a story to a child must create the requisite interest and desire in the child to get more and more interested and to develop an inquiring mind to proceed further with the story. The intensive desire to keenly follow the trends in the story should be born in the child's mind. The father helps the child to grow up and develop a continuous and well connected pattern for the progress of the child. So also any story must develop a sustaining interest in the same and the child may have to feel to be an active partner in the story world and move along the heroes and heroines with an attentive mind. The teacher imparts the knowledge to the child to be able to live up on one's own legs. So also the story must give a moral for the child to follow in life and be able to deal with various situations independently all by oneself. Hence we may begin each story with a prayer,

Mathru Devo Bhava, Pithru Devo Bhava, Guru Devo Bhava.

meaning that I worship the godliness in my mother, in my father, and in my teacher; and end each story with acknowledgement of a moral to follow in life .Anybody who wishes to narrate a story for children, keeping in view the above perceptions are welcome to contribute to the present series

A.C.Sekhar

BHISHMA

Mathru Devo Bhava

Pithru Devo Bhava

Guru Devo Bhava

The story of Bhishma is one of the heroes of Mahabharata who had great self-discipline, high determination and a strong will-power. He was known as "Grand Sire" and highly respected and adored by one and all of his time. He was the eldest son of a great king Shanthanu who ruled Hastinapura, in India, long time ago. His mother was Ganga, a divine lady who had to leave him and his father in the early years of Bhishma. After some years, his father fell in love with a fisherman's daughter, named Sathyavathi. But her father would not give her in marriage to the king for the fear that Sathyavathi's son would not ascend the throne of Hastinapura, as Bhishma, being the eldest son, would be the rightful heir to the throne. However to make his father happy, Bhishma vowed not only to renounce the throne but also to remain unmarried so that he may not have any children of his own to claim the throne. He then got Sathyavathi married to his father for which the king blessed him that Death will never come to Bhishma until he himself desires for the same. Bhishma served Sathyavathi as his own mother, looked after her well even after his father's death and safeguarded all the royal honors due to her and her children.

Sathyavathi had two children and one of them died quite young. Bhishma got the other son married to two princesses of a neighboring kingdom, by sheer exhibition of his valor and might, and himself remaining unmarried as he vowed before. After the death of his father, Bhishma had placed his cousin, Sathyavathi's son on the throne of Hastinapura as per his vow and served the new king as the Supreme Royal Advisor. The new king had three sons: Pandu, Dhritrashtra and Vidur, but died after ruling for about seven years. Pandu had two wives and five sons collectively known as Pandavas but he also died early due to some cursed physical ailments. Dhritrashtra was born blind and had 100 sons and one daughter collectively known as Kauravas (or Kurus) through a wife who voluntarily blind-folded herself not to see any light which her husband was unable to see. Vidur was a well-knowledgeable and just person. Under these circumstances Bhishma was once again left with a heavy responsibility of looking after the widows, young princes, and the kingdom of Hastinapur.

Bhishma installed Dhritrashtra as the logical interim king of Hastinapur until the eldest son of Pandu, Yudhishtira, would come of age to ascend the throne of Hastinapur and he himself once again worked in the role of Supreme Royal Advisor. However when the appropriate time had come, Duryodhana, the eldest son of Dhritrashtra would not allow Pandu's son to ascend the throne of Hastinapura and carved out a separate kingdom Indraprastha for Pandavas to rule and live separately. As the Pandavas were flourishing rapidly, Duryodhana became envious and desired to occupy Indraprastha also by defeating Yudhishtira. He therefore one day invited Yudhishtira for a game of dice and in connivance with a wicked uncle defeated him by foul means. Consequently, Pandavas had to abandon all rights on their kingdom and went into an exile for a period of thirteen years. During this period of turmoil there were several episodes when Bhishma had strongly opposed several acts of Duryodhana and his father Dhritrashtra, but in vain. However he remained loyal to the throne of Hastinapura and continued as its Chief of Armed Forces and strategic advisor, though personally he was very sympathetic to Pandavas and always admired them and wished them all success and prosperity.

During this period, the king of Mathura, Krishna, who was considered a divine incarnation became friend and relative of Pandavas. On several occasions he protected them from troubles and tribulations. He even acted as an ambassador for peace with Kauravas but could not succeed. Hence in the end a battle ensued with Krishna leading the forces on Pandava's side and Bhishma leading on the Kaurava's side. It was during this war that Lord Krishna revealed himself as the entire COSMOS and gave to the world the eternal song of Bhagavad Gita which was the guiding spirit for the entire humanity for all times to come.

During this war several famous heroes had fallen and at last it was felt that the war could not be won by Pandavas as long as Bhishma was in command on the other side. So at one time Pandavas approached the "Grand Sire" and begged him to guide them for victory. Bhishma pointed out that if he were to face anybody born a woman and comes to battle field, he would lay down his arms. On hearing this Pandavas brought Shikandi who obtained knighthood even though born a woman, to fight along side of Arjuna. When Bhishma laid down his arms, Arjuna wounded him with his arrows. But as per the blessings of his father Death will not come to Bhishma until he himself decided. So he waited till an auspicious day, on a bed of arrows, and by the side of a spring of water created by Arjuna by his arrows and finally he reached the heavenly abode at his own will. This is also the story of Mahabharat in nutshell

From this story we learn that a person of steadfast mind, and highly self disciplined will not only command the world, and earn reverence from one and all, but he will also be able to conquer death and will end his life peacefully at his own will

PARIKSHIT

Mathru Devo Bhava Pithru Devo Bhava Guru Devo Bhava

At some time or other ,many of us have felt that something has happened to us because of our fate, our destiny. To illustrate the truth of such a statement there is an interesting episode in Indian mythology

Parikshit Maharaj was a descendant of Pandavas of Mahabharat. He came to be known as a very noble and great King loved by all the men of his kingdom. He was very fond of hunting and killing deers. One day while he was hunting a deer got only wounded and ran away in the forest. The king ran after the deer but he could not find him. But he came across an Ashram belonging to a sage called Shamika. Who was then in a deep silent meditation. The king asked him several times if he had seen any wounded deer, but the sage would not answer him as he was observing silence. The king was upset as he thought he was being ignored by an ordinary hermit, and in a frivolous mood he picked up a dead snake lying around and put it round the neck of Shamika . He then went back to his palace. In the meanwhile Shamika's son Shringi arrived and seeing a dead snake around the neck of his father, got very furious .He uttered a powerful curse that who ever had placed such a dead snake around the neck of his father would die within seven days due to deadly bite by the most poisonous snake, the king of snakes Takshika. But Shamika felt sorry at his son's curse because he felt that the King Parikshit was a kind and noble person and acted innocently . He immediately sent information about his son's powerful curse to the king so that he may take necessary precautions if possible. On hearing this, the king repented very much but it was too late. After consulting his ministers, the royal doctor, and other officials in his palace, he decided to live the next seven days in complete seclusion in a special building entirely surrounded by a pond full of water so that no snake could ever come anywhere near him. However he was being supplied with regular food and water after careful inspection that no snake ever slipped into any of these. Occasionally his advisors and relatives also were visiting him. Thus all the stipulated seven days were nearly over. And the king thought he escaped the danger of being bitten by any snake. However during the last minutes of his secluded position, with a feeling of absolute safety, he desired to eat some of the fruit brought by his admirers. Inside one of those fruits there was a small worm with bright eyes which was nothing but the snake king Takshika disguised in that form. On opening the fruit the worm jumped on the king and killed him instantly. All present immediately realized what has happened because of the powerful curse of Shringi and prayed God for the soul of the king to rest in peace.

This story emphasizes that however much one wishes to change the destiny of oneself, by worldly and material measures, it cannot be done as the power of spiritual dictates are much stronger than material measures and the final destiny of anybody cannot be avoided. Also there is a lesson that nobody should do any wrong deed even in frivolous moods as some evil may come upon them some time or other quite unexpectedly.

PRAHLADA

Mathru Devo Bhava Pithru Devo Bhava Guru Devo Bhava

We have been told by wise men that God is every where and anywhere. This means that in every object we see and in every act we are connected with there is 'Godliness', some unknown power beyond our own control .To illustrate this concept there is an interesting episode in Indian mythological legends

Once upon a time there was a demon king by the name of Hiranyakashipu. He became so powerful that he conquered whole Universe and obtained some powers and boons, by which he could not be killed by any human or beast, inside or outside his palace, neither on earth nor in heaven His rule was a terror not only to human beings but also to some of the Devas who ruled various kingdoms in heaven. He did not like that any body should worship any other as God except himself as the Supreme. As time had passed, a son was born to him. He was very beautiful, chubby, always smiling Even in his cradle he was able to say "*Narayana*", "*Narayana*" the name of the God whom he had realized as the true savior of the Universe. This was not liked by his father Hiranyakashipu So when the boy became of age the demon king handed him to a Guru and gave strict instructions that the boy should never think of any God except himself as the true God. The Guru tried his best to follow the instructions of the demon king, but he failed and on the other hand found that the boy was slowly converting others also to believe that Vishnu was the true Lord who preserves and saves the world To prevent this trend, the Guru, overcome with fear of punishment by the king, handed over the young Prahlad back to his father and begged him to be excused of his failure to convert his son. The king tried through his wife, his ministers and other court officials to convert his son, but Prahlada was very vehement and continued to pray openly "*Narayana- Narayana*". Finally one day he told his son that if he does not change his attitude he would have him killed , to which Prahlada replied that he had no powers to do anything against the wishes of Lord Vishnu and continued to pray "*Narayana-Narayana*". Then the King decided to get his son killed and arranged to put Prahlada to several types of tortures like throwing him from the top of a hill, throwing him into the sea with heavy weights , setting him on fire etc. but young Prahalada was always saved from all these tortures by Vishnu himself and Prahlada remained safe and more and more devoted to the Lord. Every one was surprised at the miraculous escapes which Prahalda had and wondered what would happen next

One day the king called his son to the court and asked him where his Lord Vishnu was. Prahlada replied that He exists at all times, everywhere and anywhere. In a fit of anger the king asked him if he existed in a pillar nearby. Prahlada replied humbly and with great devotion to the Lord "Yes, He exists everywhere and even in this pillar." Thereupon, Hiranyakashipu lifted his mace and hit at the pillar very hard. Out of the broken pillar then emerged a figure, " half lion- half man" which, legends have called "Narasimha" an incarnation of the Lord Vishnu. He took the demon king in his hands, dragged him to the threshold of the palace, kept him on his lap and tore him to pieces by which the earlier boons and powers gained by the demon king were negated because he was killed by neither a full beast, nor a full man, neither inside nor outside the palace, neither on earth nor in heaven. All the palace staff including the queen were amazed and horrified at the sight, but they were also pleased to have been relieved from the tyranny of the demon king, and witness the Lord Himself. Prahlada stood in great devotion praying "*Narayana-Narayana*".and there afterwards he became known as 'Bhakta Prahlada' meaning the great Prahlada. endowed with devotion and love of God

In this story we learn two important things; (1) God, or Godliness. the great Power of Lord Vishnu the preserver of the Universe, is present at all times, every where, in all objects in any form that may not be easily noticeable by one and all, and (2) A steady mind, and a devoted faith in one's objective, as Prahlada had in Vishnu, will remove even deadly type of obstacles in one's own progress.

DHRUV

Mathru Devo Bhava, Pithru Devo Bhava, Guru Devo Bhava

All of us are aware of Pole Star. It is just above the North Pole. It is a very bright star always in the same position viewed from any portion of the earth. It has served as a guide for many mariners in the past. Even now it is a reference point for many astronomers for various type of calculations. In Indian legends there is a story about this star known as Dhruv Nakshatra. Or Dhruv Tara

Dhruv was the son of a King. The king had two wives, In those days it was an honor for a woman to be wife of a king and it was a privilege and prestige for a king to have more than one wife. Sunita was the first wife and so was entitled to be called the queen and share the throne and participate in the governance of the people. Her son would eventually become the heir to the throne. But Sunita did not have children for a long time. In the meanwhile a son was born to Sumati, the second wife and she became jealous of the queen. She was afraid that if a son were to be born to Sunita her son would not be the heir to the throne and eventually become the king. So she pleaded with the king and managed to send away Sunita to a separate dwelling in the forest. But after some time Sunita gave birth to a beautiful male child whom she named Dhruv. Dhruv grew up in the midst of Nature experiencing all its wonders and beauties. Many sages and travelers who passed by visited Sunita and her son to exchange ideas on religion, philosophy and worldly life. Sunita and Dhruv lived happily as years rolled by though Sunita was always afraid that one day something unexpected may happen which would upset their happiness.

Seven years after his birth, Dhruv expressed a desire to see his father. Although Sunita was fearful that he may not be received well in his father's palace, she readily consented. After dressing him up appropriately and feeding him, she gave necessary directions to go and see his father. When he reached the palace of his father, the king was overwhelmed with joy to see his own son after so many years and made him sit on his lap. Sumati could not tolerate this sight and pulled him out of his lap and made her own son sit there instead. Although Dhruv was disappointed he touched the feet of his father and also of Sumati and quietly returned to his own house in the forest. But he appeared distressed. When his mother pressed him to say what happened he narrated in full detail all that happened at the palace and asked a question as to who is more powerful than a king. Sunita was sorry to hear about what happened and wondered why he was asking such a question. However she replied that the Lotus eyed Vishnu is all merciful and more powerful than any king and he lives far away. After hearing that he desired to seek Lord Vishnu and so one night when his mother was asleep he went near her, prayed that Lord Vishnu may look after her and quietly went out all alone in the forest which he was never allowed before. In the forest he met with several thorny bushes, shady fearsome trees and even wild animals. He went on asking fearlessly everything and everybody he met, who was the Lotus eyed Vishnu because he did not know who exactly was the Lotus eyed Vishnu and how he looked. They were all ashamed and quietly went aside without harming him in any way. Then suddenly the sage Narada appeared before him and explained to him that the way to seek Vishnu is not go on wandering aimlessly but to sit in a place with crossed legs (*Padmasana*) and chant several times a *Mantra* 'Om Namo Narayana'. The young Dhruva accordingly followed the instruction of Narada and Lord Vishnu appeared before him and asked him what exactly he wants as he was pleased with his steadfast devotion and aim. Dhruv simply replied that he wanted nothing but to remain always with Him only. On hearing this Vishnu was pleased to grant him the boon and create a Dhruva Star, a place where he and his mother ever lived happily and he remained as a shining guide to all others.

In this story we learn that even a child can achieve the highest and most powerful by a steadfast mind and devotion to God and thus become a bright shining and guiding star to others, In Hindu mythology Lord Vishnu is supposed to be the Preserver of the entire Universe, symbolic personification of the most powerful force in Nature that has sustained our Universe

KRISHNA

Mathru Devo Bhava Pithru Devo Bhava Guru Devo Bhava

Mathura was an ancient kingdom in India, once ruled by a king named Kamsa . He was a very cruel man having ascended the throne by imprisoning his own father. He also imprisoned his own sister Devaki and brother-in-law Vasudeva as it was prophesied that their eighth child would be a son, who would kill him .So he ordered killing of each child in the prison itself, as soon as born. But when the eighth child was born the parents recognized some Divine Power in their new born son, as the gates of the prison were suddenly found opened at the time of his birth. The father of the child, Vasudeva, took the opportunity to take out the new born son to a neighboring village Gokul and exchanged his son with a girl newly born to a friend by name Nanda .He brought the girl back to the prison. On hearing the news of the birth of the eighth child to his sister , Kamsa himself arrived at the prison , and even though Devaki pleaded that it was not a boy but a girl, he lifted the child up and tried to kill the child. But the girl, also being of Divine Power Maya,, flew away with a warning to Kamsa that his real enemy was still alive and would one day surely kill him. This infuriated Kamsa very much and he set himself on a trail to kill all new born children in his kingdom

In the meanwhile, Vasudeva's son was being raised in Gokul village by the cowherd-chieftain Nanda and his wife Yashoda as their own son They named him Krishna.. He grew up to be a very lovable child admired by all fellow cowherds in the village. As a child many miracles are attributed to him He sucked life out of a vampire-nurse who was sent by Kamsa to kill the child by poisonous milk from her breast.. He liberated two bright spirits who remained as unfortunate trees for a long time under a bad spell.. Once when Yashoda rested him in an abandoned cart, a demon Shakata was sent by Kamsa to destroy the cart and thus kill Krishna, but by his magic power Krishna toppled the cart in the opposite direction and killed the demon himself to the astonishment of all villagers. Once a big hurricane engulfed the whole village and all were scared of their lives and their properties. The baby Krishna was tossed to a great height to be dropped so that he may die but, by his divine power , Krishna soon realized that the hurricane is nothing but another demon sent by Kamsa and subdued the hurricane-demon to die ultimately .Once when he was playing in mud and his mouth was covered with the same, his mother chastised him and asked him to open his mouth. To her wonder and awe she is said to have seen the whole Universe and entire Creation in his mouth. This is popularly known as Viswarupa Darshan to Yashoda and she realized the Divine Power of her son and that he is none other than the Lord Himself.

After about seven years, Krishna moved from Gokul to Brindavan forest area where he joined his elder brother Balram , son of Rohini, the second wife of Nanda. Here they tended their father's herds . The two brothers became good playmates to several young boys and girls of other cowherd families. When Krishna used to play his flute the herd-boys and herd-girls, also known as Gopis and Gopikas, used to gather around in merriment and dance . Even the cows and sheep used to enjoy the music from his flute. It was also said that even the trees & flowers blossomed, the lotus buds in the river opened up, the air became cool and fragrant whenever he played his flute.

Among the gopikas there was one girl by name Radha whose devotion and love to Krishna was so great that many legendary songs and poems came into popular vogue to perpetuate the memory of their Divine association. In Hindu literature unlike other male deities who are generally depicted along with their consorts, Krishna is shown with Radha as Radha-Krishna to symbolize the affinity of finite human activities (as Radha) with the infinite God power (as Krishna). Even to-day once in a year the Holi festival is observed with Ras-leela dances and sprinkling of colors, in memory of the great devotion and pure love of Radha to Krishna.

During this period also there were several incidents when the cruel king Kamsa had sent several demons to destroy Krishna, like Medhurasura the sheep-demon, Bakasura the crane-demon. Krishna also destroyed the serpent king Kaliya who was poisoning the entire water of river Yamuna, and thus liberated him from a curse Even Gods tried to test whether the wonder boy Krishna was the Lord himself So it happened once that Brahma created a dragon which devoured all the gopis, gopikas, together with their cattle. But Krishna having found out, created again from his own body duplicate boys , girls and cattle who

looked exactly like those devoured by Brahma's dragon. Brahma then realized the Truth about the Lord. On another occasion when the herd-boys and girls were playing and enjoying the flute of Krishna along with their cattle, Indira, the lord of Devas down poured a heavy rain causing confusion and panic amongst them. Krishna soon saw the game of Indira and lifted a heavy mountain with his little finger to provide an umbrella protection to all. This story is popularly known as Govardhanagiri story and the gods also had seen that the wonder boy was none other than the Lord Vishnu himself.

Kamsa having failed to kill Krishna by any of his messenger demons finally decided to invite him to his own court and arrange a fight with strong people so that he can personally witness the killing of Krishna. On their arrival at Mathura, Krishna and Balram were greeted by all people very warmly. They praised them for their activities, offered them fruits and flowers, and prayed God that they may successfully dethrone and kill Kamsa. so that they may be free from his tyranny and cruelty once for all. In the court of Kamsa he arranged a number of gladiators to fight with Krishna and Balram He also arranged two great wrestlers, by names Chanura and Mushtica to fight with the boys. All the invitees, and spectators which included royal guests, and ordinary citizens of Mathura were first horrified, and became apprehensive how the young boys would ever be able to face such strong and wicked opponents, but, Krishna and Balram by virtue of their divine powers defeated and killed all of them very easily to the astonishment of everybody. Finally they pulled down Kamsa from his throne and Krishna killed him also true to the earlier prophecy. There was a great rejoicing not only in the court, in the royal palace, but throughout Mathura. Krishna liberated his parents Vasudeva and Devaki who once again had the pleasure of a long lost parenthood of a divine child. Ugrasena, the imprisoned father of Kamsa was once again seated on the throne and Krishna remained only as the most important royal counselor and virtually the chief guide for the kingdom of Vrishni (also Known as yadava) people with Dwaraka as their capital

In later years Krishna sided with the army of the Pandavas who fought the great Mahabharata war with the Kauravas and delivered in the battle field the most famous "Bhagawat Geeta" which even today serves as the most accepted guiding authority for the Hindu way of life.

In this story we learn that the Supreme Power of God can never be defeated and will be duly associated with all human activities. Also wicked people with evil minds will ultimately succumb to their own plans and that there is a world of illusion which has to be recognized by one and all

The Royals of Ayodhya

Mathru Devo Bhava

Pithru Devo Bhava

Guru Devo Bhava

Ayodhya was the capital city of an ancient kingdom Khosala in India. Once a great king by name Dasaratha ruled the place. He was not only very generous and kind but most noted as a man of his words for he never failed to fulfill his promises made to anybody. He had four sons. The eldest son was Rama, born to his first wife Kaushalya. His other sons were Lakshmana and Sathrugan born to his second wife Sumitra, and Bharata born to his third wife Kaikeyi. All the sons were highly trained in all types of royal crafts and sports. Because of their extraordinary proficiency some sages who were engaged in spiritual practices in their own hermitages, sought help of Rama and Lakshmana to exterminate the notorious demons who were constantly menacing and disturbing them. The news of their victories and successes reached far and wide with great appreciation of their valour and skills. On hearing about their courage and victorious deeds, Janaka the king of Mithila, gave his daughters in a ceremonious marriage to the sons of Dasaratha. Rama and his wife Sita together with the other princes and princesses were then living very happily with King Dasaratha and his three wives, performing their assigned royal duties. They were greatly admired and loved by all people of Ayodhya.

In view of the great esteem earned by Rama from the people of Ayodhya, Dasaratha one day decided to make Rama the crown prince and soon abdicate the throne in his favour. This was welcomed by all the courtiers and also by the people of Ayodhya. In consultation with the royal priests necessary preparations were started in full gala and splendor. At this stage, on the advice of a wicked maid servant, Kaikeyi the third and youngest queen of Dasaratha desired that the king fulfill his promises made to her some years earlier. The king readily consented without anticipating any impossible requests from the queen. She demanded that Rama be immediately banished to the forest for fourteen years and that her own son Bharata be crowned as the king. This naturally saddened the king and due to shock he died soon after. Rama with his wife and brother Lakshmana went to forest to fulfill their father's promises to Kaikeyi, and live as ascetics. But Bharata being a faithful and devoted brother to Rama did not accept to be crowned as the successor king to Dasaratha. Instead, he kept the wooden sandals of Rama on the throne and looked after the kingdom as proxy ruler not from Ayodhya but from a neighboring town called Nandigram, declaring that Rama alone was the true monarch of Khosala kingdom.

In the meanwhile Rama, his wife and brother had cheerfully adopted themselves to the forest life enjoying the beauties of Nature. They were also helping other sages in several ways and destroyed many evil spirits who were disturbing the peace and tranquility of their spiritual practices. As it happened one day Sita saw a golden deer roaming in the forest and desired it be caught and brought to her to keep as a pet. but the golden deer was none other than a malicious demon called Maricha who had some evil designs. He lured Rama to chase him to a distant place and cried aloud for help imitating the voice of Rama himself. When the cry was heard by Sita and Lakshmana they felt a foul play somewhere but did not want to take any chances. So Lakshmana set out to find out the truth, leaving Sita alone in the hermitage. At that point the ten-headed Ravana in the disguise of a mendicant arrived at the hermitage and managed to kidnap Sita. On the way he met several obstructions from various elements of Nature to protest against his unethical act. Also he had to fight with a huge bird by name Jatayu but Ravana cut off his wings, overcame all other obstacles, and finally carried away Sita to his own kingdom Lanka situated beyond the seas. He kept her in a park of Ashoka trees attended by his demonic maids. While she was imprisoned there, she was in great distress, remained always in meditation over Rama, and did not even drink water and ate any food by a power she sought from Lord Indira. Several times Ravana pleaded with Sita to marry him and be the queen of Lanka, but being very devoted and faithful wife to Rama she warned him of death at the hands of Rama for his words and deeds, and remained always in grief hoping she will one day be saved by Rama from the evil clutches of Ravana. During her escort to Lanka, Sita, dropped a trail of her ornaments on the way so that Rama may find them and follow the clue to track her.

Depressed and anguished by disappearance of Sita, the royal brothers in their ascetic garments were wandering through the forest in search of her. At last they met the dying Jatayu who narrated to them how he lost his wings in fight with Ravana to save Sita. However Jatayu died peacefully under the blessing of divine power of Rama. During their onward quest, following the trail left by Sita, they met Sugriva, the king of Vanaras, monkey-headed tribe. Rama helped Sugriva by killing his powerful brother Vali, because Vali had eloped with Sugriva's wife. The chief of Vanara army, Hanuman, was entrusted with the task of

finding out Sita. He was given the royal ring of Rama to identify himself before Sita when he found her. He flew to Lanka and after a search of several places he finally located Sita. He was not sure if the lady he found was really Sita and so he started praying and praising Rama loudly. On hearing this, the otherwise depressed Sita got herself alerted and attended to Hanuman's approach. He also identified himself by the royal ring given to him by Rama before his quest of Sita. When Sita was satisfied that Hanuman was the real emissary of Rama, he wanted to carry Sita back to Rama but Sita refused as she desired that Rama alone should defeat Ravana and take her back. He pleaded with Ravana to release Sita honorably as otherwise he may be killed by Rama in a battle. Ravana not only refused but ill-treated Hanuman and ignited his tail. In retaliation, Hanuman burnt most of Lanka's palaces with the fire on his tail before he quenched it. He flew back to Rama who was staying with Sugreeva and gave the good news about the safety of Sita. The news was received joyfully by Rama, his brother and Sugriva and they all planned to invade Lanka to relieve Sita from the clutches of Ravana. With the help of Vanara army, and also assisted by birds, animals like squirrels, they built a bridge to cross to Lanka and the great battle between Rama and Ravana took place. Several heroes and relatives of Ravana perished in the battle. Even Lakshmana was said to have fainted once but the strong Hanuman brought herbal medicines from a far-off mountain Meru, and brought him back to life. One kind-hearted and wise brother of Ravana, named Vibhishana, crossed over to the side of Rama and revealed to him all the secrets of Ravana's powers. With his help and with Hanuman's devoted service, Rama finally killed Ravana but did not try to reach Sita immediately. After winning the battle and successfully conquering Lanka, he first installed Vibhishana as the rightful ruler of Lanka and desired that Sita be brought to him with full royal honours. Even when this was ceremoniously arranged Rama desired that Sita should publicly prove her truthfulness and fidelity to Rama as she lived in a foreign land for a long time. All people including Lakshmana were shocked and angry at Rama's demands but Sita insisted on proving her fidelity as desired by Rama. So she entered a burning pyre with all devotion to Rama and prayers to all Gods to witness her act as a proof of her innocence. But the Lord of Fire (Agni) saved her from burning and handed her over to Rama personally with his Divine authority extolling the great virtues of Sita. Then Rama accepted her gladly and thereafter, all of them including Vibhishana and Hanuman were said to have flown back directly to Ayodhya in a divine "Pushpak Viman" a flower-bedecked flying chariot. Rama was then crowned as king of Kosala and he ruled for a long time in a highly democratic way to the complete satisfaction of even the most common people of his kingdom. Hanuman remained with Rama as the most loyal and devoted subject and worshipped Rama as God incarnation. There are many other miscellaneous anecdotes and stories in the history of royal members of Ayodhya which go to prove the sincerity of royal members and the divinity of Rama who even today is considered as one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu himself.

This is the essence of the great epic Ramayana which was described in much greater detail by the famous sage Valmiki for the benefit of generations that followed even to this date. In this story we learn how all the members of the Royal family of Ayodhya remained very steadfast in their attitudes and how they were greatly admired by all people of all generations. Also we learn how Nature also co-operated with a noble-minded person like Rama. He was considered as an ideal son, an ideal husband, an ideal brother, and ideal man and above all an ideal prince and a king, as an example to the people of all generations.

DRONA
(Hero of Mahabharat)
Narrated by A.C.Sekhar

Matru Devo Bhava Pithru Devo Bhava Guru Devo Bhava

After Bhishma withdrew himself from the position of leading the Kaurava army in the great Mahabharata war, Drona assumed the charge. Drona was a great teacher and trainer in archery and other skills of warfare. In fact he was reverentially called Dronacharya and served as the royal Guru for both the Pandavas and also Kauravas.

Before he taught anybody he used to test the student if he was worthy of receiving the warfare skills and if he belonged to proper society and community.. He used to teach only certain class of people like Kshatriyas who were traditionally skilled in such arts and who in those days were meant to follow only such professions . Once he refused to teach a low caste student by name Kkalavya. However Ekalavya disguised himself as a Kshatriya eligible for being taught by him. Drona was unaware of the true background of the new student and believing he is also of right caste and society, taught him all the skills successfully After learning archery completely from his Guru,Drona, Ekalavya passed all examinations and proved himself excellent in the skills he had learnt. One day when the teacher wanted to rest a while Ekalavya offered his thigh to be used as a pillow for the teacher. Buit during the period of his sleep, Ekalavya was being bitten by a wasp. But Ekalavya did not move lest he should disturb his master's sleep.. However when Drona woke up he saw a pool of blood under the thigh of Ekalavya and suspected that his student could not be of the caste he professed as he did not fight back the wasp.which was sucking his blood. He then demanded to know the truth and Ekalavya had to confess about his caste.and how he disguised himself for leaning under the great master. Drona was very angry and wanted to give him such a punishment that he would not be able to use his skills.. So, Drona demanded his normal *Guru Dakshina* as was the practice in those days to honor the teacher with a presentation after a successful completion of any course. He demanded that Ekalavya give him the thumb of his right hand by which Ekalavya became incapacitated for any further archery. Ekalavya was extremely sorry for this situation but because of his integrity he immediately cut off his thumb and presented it to his master. However Ekalavya remained a legendary famous figure and some communities in India, the Bhils, worship him even today..In some villages there are some sort of temples for him

When Drona assumed charge of the Kaurava army it was very difficult for his own students Pandavas to face him. He and his son Aswathama consumed much of the Pandava army like wild fire. There was great panic in Pandava's army.. Krishna , the eternal protector of Pandavas and who was fighting on the side of pandavas as the charioteer of Arjuna., counseled Pandavas that Drona is really invincible unless a ruse is found to trap him.. Krishna explained that if he hears and believes to be true any sorrowful news he would throw away his arms and cease fighting. In order that he may believe his news to be true Krishna planned that Yudhistara, the eldest of Pandavas should convey the message as he is known to never utter a lie. Then Bhima was asked to kill an elephant by name Aswathama, the same name as Drona's son. Immediately Yudhistara announced to Drona that Aswayhaama died , there upon Drona thought by mistake that it was his own son who died. So he immediately dropped his arms and retired for meditation..

In this story we learn that teachers are sometimes selective to choose proper students as they have entrance examinations in these days for some type of courses. Also however successful students may become they can never surpass the teacher in real spirit. Also there is a point that all information must be truly verified and checked for its truth, from whatever source it may come.

VIBHISHANA

Narrator; A.C.Sekhar

Mathru Devo Bhava

Pithru Devo Bhava

Guru Devo Bhava

From the great epic Ramayan we learn that Lanka consisted of demonic people and was once ruled by Ravana with ten heads. These ten heads symbolically represent the several evils normally possessed by human beings. His kingdom consisted of people with all sorts of evil habits like drinking, killings etc. When Ravana abducted Sita, the wife of Rama, he had hidden her in his royal garden guarded by some women folk of his kingdom. Later Hanuman, the monkey soldier of Rama's friend Sugriva, of Kishkinda kingdom, visited Lanka to save Sita. Then he was surprised to see that the woman guards of Sita were in a drunken state. In fact Hanuman observed that nobody worked in Lanka and all people drank and made merry during all hours each day. Ravana also had two other brothers, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana. While Kumbhakarna was noted for his enormous eating and sleeping even for six months at a time, Vibhishana was the only virtuous man in the entire kingdom with noble ideas and deeds to his credit. It was indeed a mystery how in such an environment of Lanka there could be a man with high virtuous qualities.

During the great war between the armies of Rama and Ravana, Vibhishana with his own personal army approached Rama's camp with a white flag indicating he wanted peace and save people of Lanka from total destruction. He confessed that his brother Ravana had done great harm and is entitled for suitable punishment. Initially Rama's aids doubted Vibhishana, but as Rama declared that anybody approaching with a white flag was to be treated as an honored guest, Vibhishana was shown all due courtesy and was presented before Rama. On hearing Vibhishana's story Rama immediately declared that on the defeat of Ravana and his army, Vibhishana would be made the king of Lanka. Vibhishana revealed many secrets under which Ravana had been ruling and many weaknesses of Ravana's army. During the battle it was found that even though Rama was chopping off the heads of Ravana they were shooting up again in their respective places. This was indeed a great puzzle to Rama. Then Vibhishana revealed that the epic-center of Ravana's life was not in his heart or heads but in his stomach. Rama then aimed his arrow at Ravana's stomach and killed him. Finally when the battle was over and all soldiers, aids, demonic relatives of Ravana including his son, were killed, the gates of Lanka royal palace were opened for Vibhishana and he was declared the successor king of Lanka and there after all Lankan people were completely changed to more righteous living. Vibhishana was also given a special seat in the flower-decked air-borne vehicle (Pushpak Vimana) in which Rama flew back to the capital of his own kingdom Ayodhya. During the coronation ceremony of Rama, Vibhishana received several praises and honors for his virtues and vitality and he was given a royal farewell to go back to Lanka with great dignity to establish himself as true and just ruler of Lanka.

This story emphasizes how with true virtue and vitality one can establish himself on the earth and even convert many other evil persons to righteous living.