

THE VISHNU PURANA

The Vishnu Purana has twenty-three thousand shlokas divided into six major sections or amshas.

Maitreya and Parashara

Once the sage Maitreya came to the sage Parashara and wanted to know about the creation of the universe. And this is what Parashara told him.

In the beginning the universe was full of water. But in that water there emerged a huge egg (anda) that was round like a water-bubble. The egg became bigger and bigger and inside the egg there was Vishnu. This egg was called Brahmanda. And inside Brahmanda there were the mountains and the land, the oceans and the seas, the gods, demons and humans and the stars. On all sides, the egg was surrounded by water, fire, wind, the sky and the elements. Inside the egg, Vishnu adopted the form of Brahma and proceeded to create the universe. When the universe is to be destroyed, it is Vishnu again who adopts the form of Shiva and performs the act of destruction. Let us therefore salute the great god Vishnu.

There are four yugas or eras. These are called krita (or satya), treta, dvapara and kali. Krita era consists of four thousand years, treta of three thousand, dvapara of two thousand and kali of one thousand. All the four eras thus pass in ten thousand. And when all the four eras have passed one thousand times each, that is merely one day for Brahma. I hope you are good at elementary arithmetic. How many human years are equal to one of Brahma's days? Ten thousand times one thousand. That is, ten million years. During each of Brahma's days, the sages the gods and the kings are destroyed and recreated fourteen times. Each of these cycles is called a manvantara. But at the end of Brahma's day, there comes the final destruction. The world is burn. Brahma sleeps throughout his night, for ten million human years. Thereafter, there is creation once again.

Parashara said, "Maitreya, let me tell you about how Brahma performed the act of creation."

Brahma is merely part of Narayana. And Narayana is Vishnu. Nara means water and ayana means resting-place. When the earlier creation was destroyed, the world was full of water and Vishnu slept on the water. That is the reason why he is called Narayana. Narayana saw that there was water all around and desired to create the world. He, therefore, adopted the form of a boar (varaha) and went all the way down to the underworld. There the earth saluted him and asked him to rescue her from the underworld Upon hearing the earth's request, Vishnu in his form of a boar began to roar. He used his tusks to lift up the earth from the underworld. Then he carefully placed the

earth on the waters. The earth floated on the oceans like a huge boat. Vishnu levelled out the earth and placed the mountains in their proper places. The earth was divided into seven regions or dvipas.

After that came the question of creating the beings. There were four types of beings that Brahma created through the powers of his mind. The first were the demons or asuras, they came out of Brahma's thighs. Next came the gods or devas, they emerged from Brahma's mouth. From Brahma's sides there were created the ancestors or pitris. And the humans came out the last. Many other things were created.

After that Brahma was both hungry and angry. The demons of hunger took form and wanted to eat up Brahma, their creator. There were some among them who did not want to eat their creator, but wanted to protect (raksha) him. They came to be known as rakshas. And those who wanted to eat him came to be known as yakshas. When Brahma saw these undesirable creatures, the hairs on his head fell off and grew up and stood up again. From these hairs were born the snakes. The gandharvas were born. They were known as gandharvas because they sing.

Many other things were created. From Brahma's age were created the birds, from his chest sheep and from his mouth goats. From his stomach and sides there came out cattle and from his feet horses, elephants, deer and camels. Plants sprouted from the hair on Brahma's body.

There were four classes of humans that were created, the brahmanas, the kshatriyas, the vaishyas and the shudras. The brahmanas came out of Brahma's mouth, the kshatriyas from his chest, the vaishyas from his thighs and the shudras from his feet.

Lakshmi

Brahma also wanted to create a son who would be just like him. When he thought of this, a son appeared on his lap. But the child kept on crying (rud) and thus came to be known as Rudra. He was crying because he did not have a name. The crying stopped when Brahma gave him the name of Rudra from the word for crying. The child, however, began to cry once more and did not stop until he was given another name. This happened seven times. And so Rudra also has the names of Bhava, Sarva, Mahesha, Pashupati, Bhima, Ugra and Mahadeva. Rudra's wife was called Sati. She gave up her life because of what her father Daksha had done and was born again as Uma, the daughter of Himalaya and Menaka. Mahadeva married Uma yet again.

There was a sage called Durvasa who was descended from Mahadeva. Once upon a time, Durvasa was wandering around the world. And in the hands of a pretty woman he saw a beautiful and fragrant garland. Durvasa wanted the woman to give him the garland, which she gladly did. Durvasa placed the garland on his head and continued to

roam around the world. Who should he then run into but Indra, the king of the gods? There were other gods with Indra and Indra was seated on his elephant, Airavata. Durvasa picked up the garland and threw it at Indra. Having caught the garland, Indra placed it on the head of his elephant. Airavata must have been surprised at the pleasant smell that was coming from his head. For he raised his trunk to get a better sniff. And in the process, the garland fell off his head and onto the ground.

Durvasa was very angry. He thought that Indra had insulted him. He had not even bothered to thank Durvasa for the garland. And instead of placing the garland on his own head, he had seen it fit to place the garland on the head of an elephant. From which place it had fallen off onto the ground. Durvasa therefore got ready to curse Indra. By then, Indra had realized his mistake. He got off the elephant, fell at Durvasa's feet and begged that he might be forgiven. But Durvasa was not like the other sages; he refused to be pacified. And so he cursed Indra. What was the curse? That Lakshmi should disappear from Indra's abode. Lakshmi, you may know, is the goddess of wealth and prosperity.

When Indra returned to where he lived in Amaravati, he found the place to be dreary and dilapidated. Lakshmi had left. The plants were dying. The sages were not performing sacrifices. People had become selfish. It was not simply Amaravati that had become like this. Indra ruled over all the three worlds. And in all the three worlds this was precisely what had happened.

The demons never liked the gods and were forever trying to fight with them. They now discovered that the gods were less powerful and less well protected. So they attacked the gods and gave them a good thrashing. What were the poor gods to do? They elected the god Agni as their leader and fled to Brahma for refuge and help. Brahma told them that he was unable to help them himself; they should seek help from Vishnu. On the northern shores of the great ocean the gods assembled and began to pray.

How could Vishnu ignore such prayers? He manifested himself before the gods and gave them the following advice. The gods should meet the demons and have a temporary truce. Both sides should get together and prepare to churn the great ocean. Before the churning, herbs were to be thrown into the ocean. The mountain Mandara was to be used as the churner and the great snake Vasuki as the rope for churning. It was expected that amrita (a drink that made one immortal) would come out of the ocean as a result of the churning. And the gods should promise the demons that this amrita would be equally shared out among the two sides stronger. But the promise of the amrita would make sure that the demons took part in the churning. This was nothing but an empty promise. Vishnu hastened to assure the gods that he would ensure that the demons got none of the amrita.

This the demons did not know, they gladly agreed to the churning. Herbs were hurled into the ocean and the churning began. The gods grasped Vasuki's tail and the demons its head. In fact, it was Vishnu who asked the demons to grasp the head of the snake. Flames and smoke belched out of the mouth of the snake and made the demons suffer. The gases that came out of the snake's mouth went up into the sky and formed clouds. These clouds were driven towards the tail and poured down as soothing rain on the gods who had grasped the tail. On what was the huge mountain Mandara to be balanced? The solution was again provided by Vishnu. Vishnu adopted the form of a gigantic turtle on which the mountain could be placed.

Thus the churning went on. And wonderful were the things that emerged out of the ocean as a result of the churning. The first to come out was the cow Surabhi, worshipped by the gods. Next the goddess Varuni emerged. Followed by the fragrant tree known as parijata. Out came the apsaras (dancers of heaven). And the moon, which Mahadeva accepted as an adornment for his head. There were bad things as well. The poison that came out was accepted by the snakes. And dressed all in white, the god Dhanvantari came out with the pot of amrita in his hands. At the sight of the amrita, the gods, the demons and the sages were delighted. But there was more to come. There emerged a lotus flower with the shining form of the goddess Lakshmi. She held another lotus in her hand.

The sages began to chant hymns in front of her. The gandharvas sang, the apsaras danced. Rivers like the Ganga arrived so the Lakshmi could have a bath. There are eight elephants who protect the eight directions. These elephants took clear water from golden vessels and bathed the goddess. The ocean gave her a garland of lotus flowers which would not fade. Vishvakarma provided the jewels. Thus bathed, dressed, jewelled and garlanded, Lakshmi embraced Vishnu. Since the demons did not like Vishnu, this meant that Lakshmi had forsaken the demons. And Lakshmi smiled upon the gods. The demons did manage to get hold of the pot of amrita. But Vishnu adopted a female form to trick the demons of the amrita and give it to the the gods.

The gods drank the amrita and attacked the demons with swords. The amrita had made the gods strong and the demons were not match for them. Their armies scattered and they fled into the underworld. The gods were delighted. They bowed before Vishnu and continued to rule over heaven. The sun went back to its old path across the sky. So did the stars. Indra ascended his throne and ruled over the three worlds, after having prayed to Lakshmi.

Parashara told Maitreya. "Indra's prayers pleased Lakshmi and she agreed to grant him boons". The first boon that Indra asked for was that Lakshmi should never leave the three worlds. And the second boon was that Lakshmi should never turn away from anyone who prayerd to Lakshmi using the same prayer that Indra had used.

The Story of Dhruva

From Brahma's body was created Manu. All humans are descended from Manu's son and daughters. This is the reason for their being called manava. Manu had two righteous and brave sons known as Priyavrata and Uttanapada. Uttanapada had two wives, Suruchi's son was Dhruva. King Uttanapada was fonder of Suruchi than of Suniti and liked Uttama much more than he liked Dhruva.

One day, Dhruva found that Uttama was sitting on his father's lap on the throne. Naturally, Dhruva also wanted to climb onto his father's lap. But Suruchi scolded him saying that he should not aspire to that which was Uttama's. He should always remember that the throne was meant for Uttama and not for Dhruva.

Dhruva was angry. He went running to his mother. And he told his mother what had happened. Suniti consoled him and told him that men suffer or prosper depending on what they had done in their past lives. If one has done good deeds in an earlier life, one becomes a king, has an umbrella held over one's head and rides excellent horses and elephants in this life. Suruchi and Uttama must have performed many good deeds in their earlier lives. And Suniti and Dhruva must have performed many evil deeds in their earlier lives. This was not something to be unhappy about. Wise men were satisfied with what they got. If Dhruva was really upset at what Suruchi had said, he should stop being unhappy and should instead spend his time on being good, religious, righteous and selfless.

Suniti's words convinced Dhruva. He said, "Mother, your words have given me peace. I will try to achieve the highest position of all. True, the king loves Suruchi and true, I am not Suruchi's son. But I am your son and I will show you what I can do. Let Uttama have his throne. I do not wish for something that is someone else's. Through my own work I will achieve a place that not even my father has achieved."

Dhruva said this and went out of the house. There was a forest not very far away. And in the forest he met seven sages. He bowed before them and said, "I am Dhruva, the son of Uttanapada and Suniti. I am unhappy and so I have come before you."

The sages were surprised. "Prince," they said, "You are only four or five years old. You have nothing to be unhappy about, you have nothing to worry about. Your father is a king and he is still alive. Nor do you seem to be ill. Why then are you unhappy?"

Dhruva told them the reason for his unhappiness. He said that he desired neither wealth nor kingdoms. He simply wanted to go to a place where no one had ever been before. The sages advised him to pray to Vishnu. They also taught him the mantra that was to be used for praying to Vishnu.

Dhruva made his way to the banks of the river Yamuna. This was the region that was known as Madhuvana, because the daitya (demon) Madhu had ruled over it. Rama's brother Shatrughna had defeated Madhu's son Lavana and built the city of Mathura here. Here it was that Dhruva prayed. He prayed so hard that even the gods were disturbed. They did their best to break this tapasya of Dhruva's. The rakshasas appeared to attack him with many weapons. Jackals howled around him. Ghosts threatened him. But Dhruva was undisturbed. He thought only of Vishnu. And saw nothing but Vishnu.

The gods were worried because they thought that Dhruva was praying so that he might obtain the power to defeat them. Perhaps he wanted to become Indra, or the sun, or Kubera, Varuna or Soma. They went to Vishnu and asked him to stop Dhruva's tapasya. Vishnu reassured the gods. He knew that these were not the things that Dhruva wanted.

Vishnu appeared before Dhruva and offered him a boon. The boy opened his eyes and saw Vishnu standing before him. He wanted the boon that he should always feel like praying to Vishnu. In fact, he did not really want a boon at all. He had seen Vishnu with his own eyes and there was nothing more that he desired. Vishnu was however so pleased that he persisted in granting Dhruva some boon. Dhruva then wanted the boon that he might attain a place that was on top the entire world.

Vishnu told him that he would grant what Dhruva desired. He also told Dhruva that in an earlier life Dhruva had been a brahmana who was devoted to Vishnu. But the brahmana's friend had been a wealthy and beautiful prince. Having got a boon from Vishnu, the brahmana had desired that in his next life he might be born a prince. That was the reason why he had been born as Dhruva, the son of King Uttanapada.

But since Dhruva no longer wanted kingdoms or wealth, Vishnu would place him in the middle of the sky so that all the stars would revolve around him. His mother Suniti would also be placed in the sky near him.

Have you seen Dhruva in the sky? Of course you have. Near the seven sages who form the constellation of the Great Bear. Dhruva is nothing but the Pole Star.

The Kings Vena and Prithu

Some generations further down from Dhruva, there was a king called Vena. Vena was not a good king at all. He announced that there would be no sacrifices on earth. There was absolutely no reason for praying to Vishnu, wasn't king Vena superior to even Vishnu? The sages tried to persuade the King to change his ways, but Vena was not in a mood to listen.

The sages therefore decided that Vena should die. They chanted mantras over a straw and killed Vena with the straw. The problem however was that who would rule the kingdom in Vena's place? Vena did not have any children. The sages then began to knead the dead king's thighs. After the kneading, a dwarf who looked like a short pillar came out of the thighs.

"What shall I do?", asked the dwarf.

"Sit," said the sages and the dwarf came to be called nishada from the word for sitting. Later, the sons of Nishada came to live in the Vindhya mountains.

The sages then began to knead the dead body's right hand. And a shining man came out because of the kneading. This was Prithu. As he was born, a divine bow, arrows and armour fell on him from the skies. Everyone was happy at Prithu's birth. Even Vena no longer had to go to the hell that one has to go to if one does not have a son. The rivers and the oceans arrived with water and jewels for Prithu's coronation. The gods and Brahma arrived to bathe Prithu before the coronation. Brahma noticed that Prithu had the mark of a chakra (Vishnu's weapon) on his right hand. This was a good men, because it meant that Prithu was descended from Vishnu. Only kings whom even the gods cannot rival have this sign on their hands.

Prithu was crowned. He was a powerful king. The waters of the ocean trembled when he passed and the mountains made a path for him. His flag was never lowered. The earth yielded crops without any ploughing. The cows gave a lot of milk and the flowers were full of honey. As soon as he was born, Prithu arranged for a sacrifice (yajna). From this sacrifice were born the sutas and the magadhas, who chanted songs in Prithu's praise.

But there had been a short period between Vena's death and Prithu's birth when there had been no king on the land. The land does not flourish in the absence of a king. The herbs disappeared from the earth and people were hungry. These people went to Prithu and begged him to restore the herbs. To obtain the herbs, Prithu took up his bow and arrow and began to chase the earth. The earth adopted the form of cow and started to run. But wherever the earth went, Prithu followed. Finally, Prithu caught up with the earth and the earth restored whatever few herbs were left. To ensure tha the earth returned to normalcy and once again became fertile. Prithu levelled out the mountains with his bow. In the earlier creation, there had been no cities, villages, grains, animal husbandry, agriculture or trade.

It was because of Prithu that all this became possible. This is the reason why the earth is called prithivi.

The Prachetas

Among Prithu's descendants was a king called Prachinvarhi who married the daughter of the ocean, Savarna. Ten sons, the Prachetas, were born of this marriage. They performed very difficult tapasya (meditation) for ten thousand years under the ocean.

Maitreya asked Parashara, "Why did the Prachetas perform difficult tapasya for ten thousand years?" And this was Parashara's answer.

Brahma had asked Prachinvarhi to ensure that the world became full of people and Prachinvarhi passed on the task to his sons. But the Prachetas did not know how to go about this task. Their father told them to pray to Vishnu, for didn't Vishnu offer the solution to all problems? It was after paying to Vishnu that Brahma had created the universe at the beginning of the original creation. On hearing their father's instructions, the Prachetas prayed for ten thousand years.

When the ten thousand years were over, Vishnu appeared before them on the top of his transport Garuda. He offered them a boon and the Prachetas requested that they might be able to people the world. Having obtained the desired boon, the Prachetas emerged from the ocean and found that in their absence, the earth had been covered with trees. No winds could blow. In their anger, the Prachetas created wind and fire from their mouths. The wind uprooted the trees and the fire burnt them. All the trees began to be destroyed.

Soma, king of the trees, could not bear this to happen. He rushed to the Prachetas and tried to appease them. There was a beautiful woman called Marisha who had been born from the tree and whom Soma had brought up. Soma offered Marisha in marriage to the Prachetas. He promised them that the son who would be born, Daksha, would people the world. Soma also told the Prachetas the story of Marisha's birth.

Many years ago, there used to be a sage called Kandou. This sage was performing difficult tapasya on the banks of the river Gomati. To disturb him, Indra sent an apsara (dancer of heaven) named Pramlocha. Kandou fell in love with her, married her and lived with her for more than a hundred years in a valley in the mountain Mandara. When more than a hundred years had passed, the apsara wished to return to heaven. But Kandou said, "Stay for some more time." Pramlocha again stayed there for some more than a hundred years and wished to return to heaven after these hundred years had passed. But Kandou again said, "Stay for some more time." And this went on and on.

After many years had passed, Kandou regained his senses. He said, "Wife, one whole day is over. It is now evening. Let me say my prayers."

"One day," exclaimed Pramlocha. "Are you not aware that nine hundred and eighty-seven years, six months and three days have passed since you married me?"

This made Kandu realize what had happened. He went back to his tapasya and allowed Pramlocha to return to heaven. On her way towards heaven, Pramlocha wiped her sweat on the leaves of trees. She was bearing a baby and the baby came out with the sweat and was left with the trees. It was this baby who grew up and became Marisha.

In an earlier life, Marisha had been married to a king. But the king had died when Marisha had been very young. The young widow had prayed to Vishnu and Vishnu had agreed to grant her a boon. The widow had desired the boon that she might have a son like Brahma and that she might have good husbands in several lives. Vishnu had promised her that she would have a son like Brahma and that she would have several good husbands in the same life. That is why Marisha was now simultaneously married to the ten Prachetas.

Daksha was then born. The same Daksha who had earlier been the son of Brahma. Daksha had sixty daughters. Ten of them were married to Dharma, thirteen to Kashyapa, twenty-seven to Chandra, four to Arishtanemi, two to Angirasa and two to Krishasha. The thirteen daughters who were married to Kashyapa were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kala, Arishta, Surasa, Surabhi, Vinata, Tamra, Krodhavasha, Ira, Kadru and Muni.

Kashyapa and Diti had two brave sons^{3/4} Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. Hiranyakashipu's sons were Anuhlada, Hlada, Prahlada and Sanhlada.

The Story of Prahlada

Hiranyakashipu had received a boon from Brahma. On the strength of this boon, he conquered the three worlds. He drove out Indra from heaven and assumed the title of Indra. He also assumed the titles of Savita, Vayu, Agni, Varuna, Soma, Kubera and Yama. The gods fled from heaven (svarga) and roamed around the world in human forms. Everyone had to worship Hiranyakashipu, the king of the daityas (the sons of Diti). Hiranyakashipu lived in a magnificent palace made of crystal. There the apsaras danced. And Hiranyakashipu indulged in drinking wine.

Young Prahlada had been sent away to study with his guru (teacher). On a vacation he came home with his teacher and Hiranyakashipu naturally wanted to find out what his son had learnt.

"I have learnt to pray to Vishnu," said Prahlada.

Hiranyakashipu was furious. "Why have you taught him this nonsense?," he demanded of the guru.

"I have not," replied the teacher "This is not what I have taught him. He is saying this of his own accord.

"Dear son," asked Hiranyakashipu, "who has taught this rubbish?"

"The teacher of all teachers, Lord Vishnu," came the reply.

"Who is this Vishnu?," asked Hiranyakashipu.

"The Lord of my heart," said Prahlada.

"Lord of your heart. How can you have a Lord other than me?"

"He is not only my Lord, he is yours as well," replied Prahlada. "Lord of everyone."

"Take him away," said the angry Hiranyakashipu. "Send him back to the teacher. Let him unlearn all this."

Prahlada went back to his guru's home and studied there for many years. He was then again brought back before Hiranyakashipu.

"Son," asked Hiranyakashipu, "what did you study?"

"To pray to Vishnu," was the reply.

"Kill my evil son," said Hiranyakashipu. "There is nothing to be gained by his remaining alive. He is a disgrace to my family."

On hearing these words, hundreds and thousands of daityas attacked Prahlada with all sorts of weapons. But because Prahlada was protected by Vishnu, the weapons could do him no harm. Hiranyakashipu then let loose many poisonous snakes on Prahlada. But because Prahlada had Vishnu's protection, the fangs of the snakes could not penetrate his skin. Hiranyakashipu then asked many elephants to kill Prahlada with their tusks. The elephants threw down Prahlada on the ground and gored him with their tusks. But Prahlada thought of Vishnu and the tusks broke on his breast. On the orders of Hiranyakashipu, the daityas next lit a fire. Prahlada was put into the fire, but the flames could do nothing to him. On witnessing all this, Hiranyakashipu's priests requested him to take Prahlada out of the fire. "Don't worry," they said, "We will give him a proper education."

Prahlada went back to his guru. But whenever he could find the time, he began to teach the sons of the daityas. He taught them to pray to Vishnu.

This was reported to Hiranyakashipu, who instructed the cooks to poison Prahlada's food. The cooks did as they were told. But because Prahlada thought of Vishnu, the poison had no effect. The priests tried to persuade Prahlada once more. But to no avail. The priests then created a demon. The demon was like the flames of a fire. It dug up the earth with its feet. And attacked Prahlada with a huge trishula (trident). But the

trishula struck Prahlada's chest and broke into many pieces. This frustrated the demon and it turned around and began to attack the priests instead. The priests ran here and there, but were all killed by the demon.

This made Prahlada very unhappy. "Lord Vishnu, teacher of all the worlds, creator of all the worlds," he prayed. "Please restore these priests back to life." And as soon as Prahlada touched the dead bodies, the priests came back to life. The priests went back to Hiranyakashipu and told him what had happened.

Prahlada was taken to Hiranyakashipu once more. "What gives you these powers?," asked Hiranyakashipu.

"There are not my powers," replied Prahlada. "There are the powers of Vishnu."

On hearing Vishnu's name, Hiranyakashipu became angry once again. He instructed his servants to take Prahlada to the top of the place and throw him down so that his bones might break on the rocks below. The servants did as they were told. But Prahlada thought of Vishnu as he fell, and nothing happened to him. Hiranyakashipu then called Shambarasura. This was an asura who was well versed in the use of maya, the technique of creating illusions and hallucinations.

Shambarasura used maya to create illusions around Prahlada. But Prahlada kept thinking of Vishnu. And Vishnu's weapon, the sudarshana chakra, came and destroyed all the maya. Hiranyakashipu then asked the wind to dry up Prahlada's body. But this too failed. And Prahlada returned to the home of his teacher.

The teacher taught him the things that a king should know. These precepts of royal policy had been laid down a long time ago by Shukracharya. They taught one the rules for dealing with one's enemies and one's friends.

When his education had been completed, Prahlada was brought again before Hiranyakashipu. "Son," said Hiranyakashipu, "show me what you have learnt. How will you deal with your enemies?"

"What enemies?," asked Prahlada. "Vishnu is in me, Vishnu is in my friends and Vishnu is in my enemies. If Vishnu is everywhere, how can there be enemies? I see friends everywhere, Gods, humans, birds, animals, trees and snakes are all full of the same Vishnu. Therefore, one should look upon the whole world as one looks upon oneself."

Hiranyakashipu became mad with anger. He got up from his throne and kicked his son on the chest. He told his soldiers to tie Prahlada in nooses of snakes and throw him into the sea. They were then to throw down mountains on the sea so that Prahlada got crushed. This is precisely what the daityas did. But Prahlada kept on praying to Vishnu. He forgot all about himself and thought only of Vishnu. Prahlada became like Vishnu

himself and the nooses of snakes fell away from his body. Prahalada removed the mountains that had been thrown down by the daityas and emerged from the water. He prayed to Vishnu and Vishnu appeared before him.

"What boon do you desire, Prahlada?," asked Vishnu.

"That I may be forever faithful to you."

"Granted," said Vishnu. "What else do you want?"

"That my father's sins be forgiven."

"Granted," said Vishnu.

Prahlada returned to Hiranyakashipu and the father relented and embrace his son. Eventually, Vishnu adopted the form of a man-lion (nrishimha) and killed Hiranyakashipu. Prahlada became the king of the daityas and he ruled well and wisely. He had many sons and grandsons. One of Prahlada's sons was Virochana and Virochana's son was Vali.

I have told you that the Vishnu Purana has six major sections. This where the first section ends.

Priyavrata and Bharata

Maitreya told Parashara, "Sage, I have learnt that Manu had two sons, Priyavrata and Uttanapada. You have already told me about Uttanapada's son Dhruva. But what about Priyavrata?" And this was Parashara's reply. And this was Parashara's reply.

Priyavrata married the daughter of Kardama and had ten sons. Their names were Agnidhra, Agnivahu, Vapushmana, Dyutimana, Medha, Medhatithi. Bhavya, Savana, Putra and Jyotishmana. Medha, Agnivahu and Putra were not interested in becoming kings, they became sages. The world is divided into seven regions or dvipas. Priyavrata gave each of the remaining seven sons a dvipa to rule over. Agnidhra got Jambudvipa, Vapushmana, Shalmalidvipa, Dyuti mana Krounchadvipa, Medhatithi Plakshadvipa, Bhavya Shakadvipa, Savana Pushkaradvipa and Joytishmana Kushadvipa. King Agnidhra had nine sons, Nabhi, Kimpurusha, Ilavrita, Ramya, Shashtha, Hiranvana, Hari, Kuru and Bhadrashva. Jambudvipa was divided up by Agnidhra among these sons. Nabhi got the region that was to eventually become Bharatavarsha. Nabhi had a son called Rishabha. Rishabha had a hundred sons, the eldest of whom was Bharata. It is after Bharata that the country was called Bharatavarsha.

Some Geography

You have already been told that the world is divided into seven dvipas, Jambu, Shalmali, Krouncha, Palksha, Shaka, Pushkara and Kusha. The seven dvipas are surrounded by seven oceans. Their names are Lavana, Ikshu, Sura, Sarpi, Dadhi, Dugdha and Jala. Jambudvipa is right in the middle. And in the middle of Jambudvipa is the golden-hued Mount Meru. If the earth were to be a lotus flower, Mount Meru would be the stamen.

To the south of Mount Meru lies first Bharatavarsha, then Kimpurushavarsha and eventually Harivarsha. To the north lies first Ramyaka, then Hiranmaya and eventually the northern part of Kuruvarsha. Mount Meru is actually in Ilavritavarsha. And on four sides of Mount Meru are four mountains. To the east is Mandras, to the south Gandhamadna, to the west Vipula and to the north Suparshva. These mountains have a lot of jambu or jamum trees. That is why the region is known as Jambudvipa. There are four beautiful lakes around Mount Meru. Their names are Arunoda, Mahabhadra, Asitoda and Namasa. On the peak of Mount Meru is Brahma's famous city.

The river Ganga originates from the feet of Lord Vishnu. It flows around the moon and then falls on Brahma's city. It then divides into four rivers, Sita, Alakanada, Chakshu and Bhadra. Sita flows eastwards, Alakanada southwards into Bharatavarsha, Chakshu westwards and Bhadra northwards. In Bharatavarsha, Alakananda divides into seven rivers.

The region around Mount Meru is regarded as a svarga on earth. Here live the gods, goddesses, gandharvas, yakshas, rakshasas, daityas and danavas. Only the righteous people can go there, the sinners are not permitted to enter.

The sons of Bharata live in Bharatavarsha. There are seven major mountains in Bharatavarsha and their names are Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Shuktimana, Riksha, Vindhya and Paripatra. To the east of Bharatavarsha live the kirtas or hunters and to the west live the yavanas. The rivers Shatadru and Chandrabhaga flow out of the Himalayas, the main rivers mentioned in the Vedas from Mount Paripatra and the rivers Narmada and Surasa from Mount Vindhya.

Jambudvipa is surrounded by the ocean named Lavana. The people of Jambudvipa worship Vishnu. In other dvipas, other gods are worshipped. Bharatavarsha is the best part of Jambudvipa.

There are seven underworlds (patala) on earth. Their names are Atala, Vitala, Nitala, Gabhastimata, Mahatala, Sutala and Patala. Here live the danavas, daityas, yakshas and nagas. Narada once went on a trip to patala and discovered that patala was more beautiful than svaraga. It was a place full of jewels. During the day, the sun only provided light, but no heat. And during the night, the moonbeams provided light, but no cold. Patala was full of rivers, forests and lakes. The inhabitants of patala wore beautiful

clothes, rubbed scented paste on their bodies and loved music. At the bottom of patala was Vishnu in the form of a thousand-headed snake. This snake was known as Shesha.

Under the earth and the water are several hells (naraka). They form the kingdom that Yama rules over. There are different narakas for different types of sinners. Those who lie and bear false witness go to Rourava. Those who kill cows go to Rodha. Those who drink, kill brahmanas or steal gold go to Shukara. Those who kill kshatriyas or vaishyas go to Tala. Those who treat their teachers' wives badly go to Taptakunda. Those who kill messengers or sell women or horses go to Taptalouha. Those who treat their daughters and daughters-in-law badly go to Mahajvala. Those who show disrespect to their seniors or those who criticize the Vedas go to Lavana. Thieves go to Vimohana. Those who criticize good things, Vedas or brahmanas and those who hate their fathers go to Krimibhaksha.

Those who eat before their fathers, gods or guests go to Lalabhaksha. Those who make arrows go to Vedhaka. Those who make swords go to Vishasana. Astrologers go to Adhomukha. Fathers who eat sweets without offering them to their children and brahmanas who sell meat, milk or salt to go to Puyavaha. This is also the naraka that is reserved for brahmanas who keep cats, hens, goats, dogs, pigs or birds to make a living. Brahmanas who make a living as actors or fishermen and poisoners and arsonists go to the naraka known as Rudhirandha. Those who destroy villages go to Vaitarani. The unclean go to the naraka known as Krishna. Those who destroy forests for no reason go to Asipatravana. Those who make a living by keeping sheep or those who kill deer go to Vanhijvala. Fathers who study under their sons go to Shvabhajana. Those who oppose the law of the four classes go to Niraya.

Apart from these narakas, there are thousands of others. Apart from the sins mentioned earlier, there are thousands of other sins. In the narakas, sinners suffer for their sins. They are hung upside down. Once they have spent the time in naraka and have paid for their sins, they are born again. Depending on how they have behaved, people are born as trees, creepers, worms, fish, birds, animals, human religious people or gods. A sinner does not however have to go to naraka if he repents for his sins. And the best way to repent is to think of Vishnu.

Some Astronomy

Many miles above the earth is the world of the sun. Then come the several worlds of the moon, the Stars, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the saptarshis (the Great Bear constellation) and Dhruva respectively. Dhruva is the centre of all the stars. Above it is Janaloka, where Brahma's sons live. Gods live in Tapoloka, above Janaloka. Satyaloka is still higher up. It is divided into Brahmhaloka and Vaikunthaloka, abodes of Brahma and Vishnu respectively.

The inhabitants of Dhruvaloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka are not destroyed at the end of each cycle of creation. But the inhabitants of the other three lokas are destroyed. The first of these lokas is of course the earth or bhurloka. The second is bhuvarka, where live the sages, the region between the earth and the sun. And the third is svaroka, the region from the sun to Dhruva. There are thus seven lokas in all.

Actually, the universe consists of fourteen regions, the seven lokas and seven patalas. A loka or a patala is called a bhuvana and there are fourteen such buvanas in the universe. The first of these lokas is of course the earth or bhurloka. The second is bhuvarka, where live the sages, the region between the earth and the sun. And the third is svaroka, the region from the sun to Dhruva. There are thus seven lokas in all.

Actually, the universe consists of fourteen regions, the seven lokas and seven patalas. A loka or a patala is called a bhuvana and there are fourteen such burvanas in the universe. The bhuvanas are surrounded by darkness on all sides. Around the darkness is water. And around the water is fire. Beyond the fire is the wind and beyond the wind there is the sky.

The Story of Jadabharata

Many years ago there used to live a king named Bharata. He was the son of Rishabha and used to live in a place known as Shalagrama. He thought of Vishnu all the time, even in his dreams and he had given up all thought of violence.

Once Bharata had gone to bathe in a river. A deer had also come to drink water there. While the deer was drinking water, there was the terrible roar of a lion. The deer gave a frightened leap and gave an untimely birth. The baby fell into the river. The mother deer died as a result of the leap. But Bharata rescued the baby deer from the water and brought it home to his ashrama (hermitage). Every day, the king fed the baby and slowly, the deer grew bigger. It wandered around the hermitage. Sometimes it even wandered out, but returned quickly as it was frightened of tigers. Asit grew older, the deer would leave the ashrama in the mornings and return in the evenings.

Bharata grew attached to the deer and forgot everything else. He had given up his kingdom, his sons, and his friends and forgotten them all. But he could not forget the deer. If the deer was late in returning to the ashrama, he would worry that it might have been eaten up by a wolf or a tiger or a lion. He would be happy only when the deer returned. And because Bharata thought about the deer so much, he forgot to think of Vishnu.

Many years passed. Bharata died watching the deer and thinking of it. Since he thought of the deer while dying, he was born as a deer in his next life. The only difference was that he was born as a jatismara deer, that is, a deer that remembered the incidents of its

past life. As a deer, Bharata left his mother and came again to Shalagrama because he remembered his old place. He lived on dry leaves and dry grass and eventually died. He was reborn as a jatismara brahmana. In this life he was truly learned, well versed in all the shastras.

Since he had attained the supreme knowledge, he saw no point in reading the Vedas or in doing work. He kept to himself and spoke little, only when he had to. His body was dirty, his clothes were filthy and he never cleaned his teeth. Because of this, people treated him badly. But since interaction with people was an obstacle to attaining supreme knowledge. Bharata kept up this pretence of being slightly mad. He moved so little that he came to be known as Jababharata. He ate whatever was available to him. And when his father died, his brothers, nephews and friends, gave him only dirty food to eat. Since he was strong and stout, they used him in their farming work.

The sage Kapila had an ashrama on the banks of the river Ikshumati. One day, the King of Soubira wanted to go there on a palanquin to learn words of wisdom from the sage. The servant of the king looked for palanquin-bearers who would carry the palanquin free of charge and found Bharata. So Bharata bore the palanquin along with the other bearers. But he walked slowly while the other bearers walked fast. The result was that the palanquin did not move smoothly. When scolded, the other bearers naturally blamed Bharata for this difficulty.

"What is wrong?" Asked the king of Bharata, "Haven't you borne the palanquin only for a little while? How is it that you are tired? Can't you bear a little burden? You look quite strong to me."

Bharata's answer was this. "Who am I and who are you? What you have seen is only my body and your body. I am not my body and nor are you your body. Our atmans or souls are what we really are. My atman is not strong or tired, nor is it carrying your palanquin upon its shoulders."

Having said this, Bharata was quiet again. But the king got down from the palanquin and fell at his feet. He wanted to know who Bharata really was, for such words of wisdom do not come from an ordinary man. Bharata then told him the truth about the atman, which is never destroyed and takes up different bodies from one life to another. This is the jivatman. In addition, there is the paramatman, which is Vishnu and is everywhere. There is no difference between the jivatman and the paramatman and the person who has realized this is truly wise. To think that the jivatman is different from the paramatman is to suffer from maya or illusion.

Bharata also told the king a story. Many years ago Brahma had a son known as Ribhu. Ribhu was very learned and his disciple was Nidagha, the son of Pulastya. The teacher and the pupil used to live in the banks of the river Devika, near a city known as

Viranagara, but Ribhu realized that Nidagha was still not ready for the supreme knowledge. So he sent the pupil to live in the city, although he continued to live in the forest.

One day, Ribhu decided to pay Nidagha a visit to see how the disciple was getting on. After Ribhu had washed his hands and feet, Nidagha offered him food. "Please eat," he said.

"What have you got to eat?" asked Ribhu. "Is it clean food?"

"I have rice and cereals and fruit and sweets." Replied Nidagha.

"That is unclean food," said the teacher. "Make me rice pudding, curds and wine."

Nidagha asked his wife to prepare the desired food. The food was prepared and Ribhu had his fill.

"Are you content now?" asked Nidagha. "Where are you going and why did you come here?"

Ribhu replied as follows. "Those who are hungry become content on eating food. I was not hungry, so the question of my being content after eating does not arise. Why ask me a silly question? The body feels hungry, I do not. I am not the body. You asked me where I was going and why did I come here. These are meaningless questions. My atman is everywhere, it cannot go or come. I am not really what you see. Nor are you what I see. I did not care at all about what you gave me to eat. I said all that just to see what you would say. Since all food is made of the same elements, it all tastes alike. Learn this, for this is true knowledge."

Thereupon, Nidagha bowed down before Ribhu and said that his illusions have now been destroyed.

After one thousand years had passed, Ribhu came again to Nidagha. And he found that Nidagha now lived outside the city, eating grass and straw. He didn't mix with other people and had become frail and thin. Ribhu again gave him a lesson on true knowledge, which does not distinguish between all things and paramatman.

And Bharata said that this was the knowledge that the king should learn. The sky sometimes looks blue and sometimes white, but it is the same sky. These who suffer from illusions look upon different atmans separately. But they are truly all part of the same atman. There is nothing in the world except this atman and all of us are parts of the same atman.

This is the end of the second section of the Vishnu Purana.

The Manvantaras

The manvantara is a cycle of creation and destruction. A Manu rules over each such manvantara. There have been six manvantaras till now and the names of the respective Manus were Svayambhuva, Svarochasha, Uttami, Tamasa, Raivata and Chakshusha. Vaivasvata, the son of the sun, rules over the present and seventh manvantara. Each manvantara has its own gods and rishis. The gods of the present manvantara are the adityas, the vasus and the rudra and Purandara holds the title of Indra, the king of the gods. The names of the seven rishis of the present manvantara are Vashistha, Kashyapa, Atri, Jamadagni, Goutama, Vishvamitra and Bharadvaja.

These were the seven manvantaras that have passed. But there are seven manvantaras yet to come.

Vishvakarma had a daughter named Samjna who was married to Surya, the sun. Their children were called Manu, Yama and Yami. After some time, Samjna found that she could no longer bear the energy of her husband. So she created a woman known as Chhaya who looked exactly like her. She left Chhaya to look after her husband and went off to meditate in a forest. Surya did not know that this was Chhaya and not Samjna. Surya and Chhaya had two sons called Shanaishchara and Savarni Manu and a daughter called Tapati.

One day, for some reason, Chhaya became very angry and cursed yama. Both Yama and Surya then understood that this woman could not be Yama's mother Samjna and must be someone else. Chhaya told them what had happened. And Surya learnt that Samjna was performing tapasya in a forest in the form of a mare. Surya himself adopted the form of a horse and joined his wife. As horses, they had three sons, the two Ashvinis and Revanata.

Surya wanted to bring Samjna back to his home. The problem however was Surya's energy, which Samjna could not stand. Therefore, Vishvakarma sliced off Surya's energy and the sliced off part fell on the earth. With this energy Vishvakarma made Vishnu's chakra, Rudra's trishula, Kubera's palanquin, Kartikeya's spear and other weapons of the other gods.

As mentioned earlier, Surya and Chhaya had a son called Savarni Manu. This would be the Manu in the eighth manvantara and Indra would then be Vali, the son of Virochana. The ninth Manu would be Dakshasavarni, the tenth Brahmasavarni, the eleventh Dharmasavarni, the twelfth Savarna, the thirteenth Rouchya and the fourteenth Bhoutya. At the end of each four cycle of yugas, the Vedas are destroyed and in each satya yuga, the respective Manu rewrites the sacred shastras. In each manvantara, Manu, the seven rishis, Indra the gods and the kings are created afresh. Fourteen

manvantaras make a kalpa comes Brahma's night. During that night, Vishnu in his form of Brahma sleeps on the waters that are everywhere.

Vedavyasa

In each age, Vishnu in his form of Vedavyasa, divided the Vedas. In every dvapara yuga, this is done. The present manvantara is the Vaivasvata manvantara and in this manvantara, the Vedas have already been divided twenty-eight times. The names of these twenty-eight Vedavyases were Svayambhu, Prajapati, Ushana, Brihaspati, Savita, Mrityu, Indra, Vashishtha, Sarasvata, Tridhama, Trivisha, Bharadvaja, Antariksha, Vapri, Trayaruna, Dhananjaya, Kritanjaya, Rinajya, Bharadvaja, Goutama, Haryatma, Vena, Trinavindu, Riksha, Shaktri, Parashara, Jatukarna and Krishna Dvaipayana. The Vishnu Purana says that the next Vedavyasa will be Drona's son Ashvatthama. As you may know from the Mahabharata, Ashvatthama is immortal.

The essence of brahman and the four Vedas is captured in the word Om. Brahman is everywhere, but appears to different people in different forms.

The four Vedas, Rig, Yajur, Sama, and Atharva, together have one lakh shlokas. It is from the Vedas that the ten famous sacrifices (yajnas) originate. When Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa sought to divide the four Vedas, he first gathered around him four disciples who were learned in the Vedas. Paila was taught the Rig Veda, Vaishampayana the Yajur Veda, Jaimini the Sama Veda and Sumantu the Atharva Veda. Krishna Dvaipayana taught the Puranas to his discipline Romaharshana.

Yajnavalka

Once upon a time, the famous rishis decided that they would have a gathering. They also decided that whoever did not come to this gathering, would after a period of seven days commit the crime of killing a brahmana. All the sages came to this gathering, but Vaishampayana did not. After seven days, Vaishampayana stepped on his nephew and killed him by mistake. This was a terrible sin and had to be atoned for.

Vaishampayana had divided the Yajur Veda into twenty-seven parts and had distributed these parts among various disciples. One of these disciples was Yajnavalka. Vaishampayana called his disciples together and said, "I have committed the crime of killing a brahmana. Please arrange for a sacrifice so that I might atone for this sin."

On hearing this Yajnavalka said, "There is no need to bother about these other disciplines. They do not have much power. I will arrange for the sacrifice myself."

This made Vaishampayana angry. "You have insulted the other disciples, Yajnavalka," he said. "Return to me what I have taught you. I do not need a disciple like you."

Yajnavalka replied, "I said what I did because I respected you. But since you have misunderstood, I too do not require a teacher like you. Here is what I have learnt. I am returning it."

Yajnavalka then vomited out the Yajur Veda and the other disciplines ate it up in the form of birds. That is why this branch of the Yajur Veda is called the Taittiriya after the name of the bird Tittira.

But Yajnavalka still wanted to learn the Yajur Veda. So he began to pray to the sun. The sun finally appeared to him in the form of a horse and taught him those branches of the Yajur Veda which even Vaishampayana did not know.

The Puranas

Now the Vishnu Purana describes what the Puranas are and how they came to be written. It says that the original text Purana Samhita was taught by Vedavyasa to his disciple Romaharshana (also called Lomaharshana). Romaharshana had six disciples, Sumati, Agnivarchah, Mitrayu, Shamshapayana, Akritavrana and Savarni. Each of these disciples composed a Purana on the basis of the Purana Samhita. It was on the basis of these that the Vishnu Purana had been written. It was written after the Padma Purana and is devoted to the glory of Lord Vishnu.

There are fourteen types of knowledge (vidya). These are the four Vedas, the six Vedangas, Mimamsa, Nyaya, the Puranas and the Dharmashastras. To this one might add four further forms of knowledge, Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, music and Arthashastra. There are three types of rishis, brahmarshis, devarshis and rajarshis.

Yama

When people die, they come under the control of Yama and Yama sends them to different narakas. When they have atoned for their sins, they are reborn. Maitreya wanted to know if there was any way in which men could avoid going to Yama after death.

Parashara told him that Nakula had asked the same question of his grandfather Bhishma. And Bhishma had told him that he used to have a brahmana friend from Kalinga. This friend had learned words of wisdom from a jatismara sage. The sage had told Bhishma's friend of a conversation that had once taken place between Yama and Yama's servant.

Yama told his servant, "Do not touch those who are devoted to Vishnu. I am the lord of all the others except these. I am not really independent, I work under the supervision of Vishnu. He is also capable of punishing me. Even the gods worship the lotus-like feet of Vishnu. Stay away from the devotees of Vishnu."

"How does one become a devotee of Vishnu?" asked the servant.

Yama replied, "Those who do not deviate from what is laid down from their class, those who make no distinction between friends and enemies, those who are thieves, those who are non-violent and those whose hearts are pure and free of anger, these are the devotees of Vishnu. They think of Vishnu all the time. And because they think of Vishnu all the time, they are of pleasing appearance. When Vishnu is in one's heart, one commits no sins. Do not go near such people. For the strength of Vishnu's chakra is such that your or mine powers would immediately be destroyed."

The Four Classes and the Four Stages

The most important way of following Vishnu is to follow the law of the four classes (varna) and the law of the four stages (ashrama) as laid down in the shastras (sacred texts)

The four classes are brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas and shudras. It is the duty of the brahmana to give alms, worship the gods through sacrifices and study the Vedas. They should treat all living beings well and not harm anyone. The most important wealth a brahmana can have is the friendship of others. A kshatriya should donate to brahmanas, study and perform sacrifices to Vishnu. But his most important duty is to bear arms to protect the earth. The king's duties are to punish the evil and protect the good. The vaishyas are to do animal husbandry, trade and agriculture. In addition, they should study, donate alms and perform sacrifices. The shudra's duty is to serve the other classes. If it is impossible to make a living through this, the shudra may make a living through trade or handicrafts.

Common duties of all four classes are kindness, cleanliness, hard work, truthfulness, friendship and the capacity to bear hardship. If for some reason a brahmana cannot make a living through the methods that have been laid down, he can take up arms and perform the duties of kshatriya. Or he can take up agriculture, animal husbandry or trade. A kshatriya can also take up agriculture, animal husbandry or trade. But a brahmana or a kshatriya should never take up the duties of a shudra. This is permitted only in times of great danger or if there is absolutely no other way out. Everyone should ensure that the duties of the four classes do not get mixed up.

The first of the ashramas is brahmacharya (celibate studenthood). After he has been invested with his sacred thread, a son should be sent to his teacher's house to learn the Vedas. There he will lead a clean life and pay attention to the rituals. He will serve his guru and study the Vedas. In the morning and the evening he will pray to the sun and the fire and bow to his teacher after the prayers are over. The disciple (shishya) will sit only after the guru sits, he will walk only after the guru walks. He will never oppose his guru. When the guru asks him to, he will sit down and study the Vedas. Every morning,

the shishya will bring water and flowers for his guru. Eventually, the shishya will have learnt the Vedas and attained knowledge. He will then pay the guru the price of the knowledge (dakshina), take the guru's permission and prepare to step into the next ashrama, that of garhasthya (householder stage).

This is the time to get married and choose a proper living. Such a person has to serve gods through sacrifices, guests through food, rishis through reading the Vedas, Brahma through having children and the entire world through truthfulness. In many ways, a garhasthya ashrama is superior to the others. The brahmanas and those who follow brahmacharya may have to through alms. It is the person in garhasthya ashrama who provides them this. When guests arrive, the householder will offer whatever he can in the nature of food, seats and beds. If a guest goes away dissatisfied, he takes away the householder's punya (store of merits) and leaves his sins with the householder. A guest is never to be refused.

After a person has lived a full life as a householder, he may proceed to the forest-dweller stage, vanaprastha. He can take his wife with him or leave her in the care of his son. He will live in the forest on fruits and roots and leaves, he will sleep on the ground and he will not cut his hair or shave his beard. He will worship the gods, tend to guests and give alms to those who need them. His main duty is meditation.

The final ashrama is that of sannyasa. A person is ready to enter this when he can give up his sons, wife and all material possessions. To him all living beings will be friends and he will not harm any living being. He will live alone and perform yoga (exercises that unite man with God). He will never stay in a village more than one night at the time and in a city for more than five nights at a time. A sannyasi or hermit will beg for his food. But he will come to a house for alms only after he is sure that everyone in the house has eaten.

Rituals

There are some rituals to be followed when a son is born and some others to be followed when a funeral ceremony (shraddha) is to be held. The father gives a name to the son after the tenth day of birth. There are eight types of marriage. Their names are Brahman, Daivya, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa and Paishacha. For each varna or class, specific forms of marriage are prescribed.

There are some rituals that are laid down for a householder. Every day he must worship gods, cows, brahmanas, sages and elderly teachers. He should never steal, never lie and never utter what is unpleasant to others' faults. He should not be envious of other people's property. Nor should he associate himself with those who are evil. He should never enter a burning house or climb to the very top of a tree. He should cover his mouth when yawning. He should be careful of stepping on the shadows of gods and

flags and those who should be worshipped. One should not live in a house alone, nor should one go to a forest alone. One should avoid going near wild beasts.

A good householder does not leave his house before bowing to a religious object, a flower, a jewel, clarified butter or a respected person. When he travels at night or goes to a forest, he carries a stick in his hand. He always wears sandals and uses an umbrella when it rains or when the sun is out. He is a friend to all beings. He always tells the truth. But when the truth harms other people, he keeps quiet.

Several rituals have to be followed when a son or daughter gets married, when a new house is to be entered, when a son is to be named or when a new-born baby is to be first seen.

When someone dies, the dead body is to be bathed and garlanded. The dead body must always be burnt outside the village. For a brahmana the shraddha ceremony takes place after ten days, for a kshatriya after twelve days, for a vaishya after fifteen days and for a shudra after a month. At a funeral ceremony an odd number of brahmanas must be fed. If ordinary food is given to brahmanas at a funeral, the ancestors remain satisfied for a month. But they are satisfied for two months if fish is given, for three months if rabbit is given. For four months in the case of the meat of birds, for five months with pork, for six months with mutton, for seven months with venison, for eight months if a special sort of deer meat is given, for nine months with gayal meat, for ten months with lamb, for eleven months with beef, and forever with the meat of a vardhinasa bird. The best place to perform a shraddha is Gaya.

Mayamoha

Many years ago there was a war between the devas and the asuras that lasted for a year. At the end of the war, some daityas named Hrada defeated the devas. The devas fled to the northern shores of an ocean and there began to pray to Vishnu. Vishnu appeared before the devas and created for them a being called Mayamoha out of his own body. Led by Mayamoha, the devas went to fight with the asuras.

The asuras were performing tapasya on the banks of the river Narmada. Mayamoha appeared before them dressed in leaves and with a shaven head. He told them that the best way to attain what the asuras desired was through the religion preached by Mayamoha. The asuras were persuaded by Mayamoha to leave the path of the Vedas. The asuras who adopted this new religion came to be known as arhats. They began to criticize the Vedas and the devas. Others criticized yajnas and brahmanas.

The asuras were thus dislodged from the righteous path and the devas attacked them afresh. This time the devas could defeat the asuras, since the asuras had lost the power of their religion.

Shatadhanu and Shaivya

Many years ago there used to be a king known as Shatadhanu. His wife Shaivya was a religious woman. Together, they used to pray to Vishnu, on the banks of the river Bhagirathi. They were not interested in other things. One day a fraudulent teacher came to them. Shatadhanu spoke to this person, but Shaivya did not. Some years later, Shatadhanu died and Shaivya also died with him on the funeral pyre.

Because he had spoken to the false teacher, Shatadhanu was born as a dog in his next life. And Shaivya was born as a jatismara daughter to the king of Kashi. When the king of Kashi wished to get his daughter married off, Shaivya refused. She had learnt that her husband had been born as a dog and was living in the city of Visisha. So she went there and met the dog. She gave it good food to eat. The dog merely wagged its tail. At this, Shaivya felt ashamed and tried to remind the dog of its earlier life.

Finally the dog did remember its earlier life and this made it very sad. It left the city and climbed a mountain peak. From there it threw itself down on the desert and died. This time it was born as a jackal and again Shaivya met the jackal in the mountain named Kolahal. She reminded the jackal of its earlier life. Thus reminded, the jackal died in the forest and was born as a wolf. Shaivya met the wolf and reminded it of its earlier life. When the wolf died, it was born as a vulture. Shaivya went to meet it. This time, after the death of the vulture, Shatadhanu was born as a crow. The crow was next born as a peacock. Shaivya made friends with the peacock.

King Janaka was performing an ashvamedha sacrifice. The peacock had a bath at the time of the sacrifice. When Shaivya reminded the peacock of its earlier life, it died. It was now born as the son of Janaka and Shaivya agreed to marry him. After Janaka died, his son became the ruler of the kingdom of Videha. In this life Shatadhanu performed many sacrifices and gave many alms. He had several sons and ruled the kingdom and the earth well. When he died, Shaivya again died on the funeral pyre with him. Husband and wife went to heaven.

The story illustrates the evils of speaking to fraudulent people who have given up the Vedas. One goes straight to naraka if one mixes with such people.

This is the end of the third section of the Vishnu Purana.

Dynasties

There were many great people in the line of Manu. The first in this line was Brahma. In the beginning of creation, Vishnu in his form of Brahman came out of brahmada. From Brahma's fingers was born Daksha Prajapati. Daksha's daughter was Aditi, Aditi's son was Surya and Surya's son was Manu. Because Manu wanted a son, he prayed to the

gods Mitra and Varuna. From the yajna that was done, a daughter named Ila came out. But Manu had really wanted a son. So, for a while, Ila became a son called Sudyumna.

Chandra's son was Budha. Sudyumna was one day wandering around Budha's ashrama as the girl Ila. Budha married her and they had a son called Pururava. After Pururava was born, Sudyumna performed sacrifices so as to become a man again. Once he became a man, he had three sons called Utkala, Gaya and Vinata.

In this dynasty there was a king called Marutta. Marutta performed a wonderful yajna. No such yajna has been performed ever since. Every article used in the ceremony was made of gold. Indra drank a lot of soma juice and was satisfied. So were the brahmanas. It was the gods who served the food.

Further down the family tree there was a king called Sharyati. Sharyati had a daughter named Sukanya. Sukanaya was married to the sage Chyavana. Sharyati also had a son named Anarta and Anarta had a son named Revata. Revata had one hundred sons, the eldest being Kakudmi. Kakudmi's daughter was Revati. Kakudmi did not know who to marry off this beautiful daughter to. He decided to go to Brahmaloaka to ask for Brahma's advice. When he reached Brahmaloaka, the gandharvas were singing and Kakudmi decided to listen to the songs for a while. When the songs were finished, he asked Brahma whom he should get Revati married to.

"What is your opinion?" ,asked Brahma.

Kakudmi named several kings who he thought might be good husbands for Revati. But Brahma told him that while he had been listening to the songs in Brahmaloaka, several thousand years had passed on earth. These kings and their sons and grandsons were all dead. In fact, Kakudmi's capital Kushasthali was now a city called Dvaraka. And Vishnu had been born as Baladeva there. There could be no better husband for Revati.

Kakudmi returned to earth and found that men were now much shorter than they used to be. He married Revati off to Baladeva. But Revati was very tall. So with his plough, Baladeva pulled Revati down to the right size.

Ikshvaku, Yuvanashva and Soubhari

Many happened to sneeze once. As a result of the sneeze, a son known as Ikshvaku came out of his nose. Ikshvaku's son was Vikukshi. Ikshvaku wished to perform a shradha ceremony and sent his son off to the forest to bring meat for the ceremony. Vikukshi killed many deer and felt hungry and tired. To satisfy his hunger he ate a rabbit and brought the other meat to his father, who then offered the meat to Vashishtha who was looking after the ceremony.

"This meat is unclean," said the sage, "your son has already eaten the meat of a rabbit."

Ikshvaku banished Vikukshi, although Vikukshi did rule the kingdom after Ikshvaku died. Vikukshi had a very brave son called Paranjaya. The devas and the asuras once fought a terrible war and the devas could not defeat the asuras. The devas prayed to Vishnu and Vishnu told them that he would be born on earth as Paranjaya. Under Paranjaya's leadership, the devas would be able to defeat the asuras. So the gods came to Paranjaya and asked him to be their leader in this war. Paranjaya agreed to do this only if he could fight the war perched on Indra's shoulders. Indra adopted the form of a bull. Paranjaya fought the war seated on the bull. The demons were defeated. But from the word kakut, which means shoulder. Paranjaya hereafter came to be known as Kakutstha.

Among Kakutstha's descendants was a king called Yuvanashva. Yuvanashva did not have any son. He persuaded the sages to perform a yajna so that he might have a son. The ceremony finished at midnight and the sages kept the sacred waters of the yajna in a pot for the night. The intention was to give the sacred waters to Yuvanashva's wife to drink in the morning. Then she would have a strong son. But Yuvanashva felt very thirsty in the night. And without knowing that the waters in the pot were sacred, drank them by mistake. So a baby came into Yuvanashva's body and grew bigger and bigger. When the time came for the baby to be born, it burst out through the king's right side, although the king did not die. But the problem was, who would be a mother to the baby? Given the peculiar circumstances, Indra agreed to be the mother. He came and said, "Mam dhata," which means "I will be the nurse." The baby thus came to be known as Mandhata. Because Indra was rearing him, he became fully grown in a single day. He ruled the entire world from where the sun rises to where it sets.

During Mandhata's reign, a sage named Soubhari lived under the water for twelve years. He used to see the king of the fishes playing in the water with his children and grandchildren. This made Soubhari feel that he should also have children and grandchildren. But to do this, he needed to get married.

Mandhata had fifty daughters. Soubhari went to Mandhata and wanted one of these daughters in marriage. Mandhata did not like the look of Soubhari's diseased body. But at the same time, he was scared that he might be cursed if he refused. So he said that the custom of his family was that daughters married bridegrooms whom they chose and approved of. Soubhari realized that this was merely a ploy of Mandhata's to avoid giving a daughter in marriage to a diseased old man. Soubhari therefore requested that he might be given one chance to meet the daughters of Mandhata. If any one of them wished to marry him, only then would he marry. If all of them refused to marry him, he would go away and no more would be heard of the matter.

This seemed to be a reasonable enough request and Mandhata agreed. But Soubhari was a powerful sage. Before meeting the daughters, he transformed himself into a very

handsome man. He was so handsome that all the daughters wished to marry him. The result was that Soubhari was married to all the fifty daughters and took them to his ashrama. He then called Vishvakarma and asked Vishvakarma to build separate palaces for the fifty wives. Each palace was to have a lake with lotuses and swans, each palace was to have a pleasure garden and beautiful beds, seats and jewels. Vishvakarma did as he had been instructed.

After some days, Mandhata wished to find out how his daughters were. He came to the ashrama and saw the beautiful palaces and pleasure gardens. He entered one of the palaces and met one of his daughters there. "How are you, daughter?", he asked.

"I live in a wonderful palace, father," the daughter replied. "Look at this pleasure garden, look at these beautiful birds and the gorgeous lake. I eat good food and wear nice clothes and jewels. I am very happy. The only complaint that I have is this. My husband spends all his time with me, he never leaves me. This means that he must be neglecting my sisters."

Mandhata came out of this palace and went into another. To his great surprise, the second daughter said exactly the same thing. In fact, this is what all the daughters said. For what had happened was that Soubhari had created fifty different forms of himself with the powers of his tapasya. Mandhata had never witnessed anything like this. He fell down at Soubhari's feet and begged for forgiveness.

Soubhari had a hundred and fifty sons to whom he got quite attached. But after some time he realized the dangers of such attachment. It had made him deviate from his path of tapasya. He realized the illusions he had been living with ever since he had seen the king of the fishes. He devoted the rest of his life to Vishnu.

Sagara

There were many powerful kings among Mandhata's descendants. One of these was Purukutsa. Many years ago, the underworld was occupied by the gandharvas. They upset the rule of the snakes (nagas) and stole their jewels. The besieged nagas prayed to Vishnu for deliverance. Vishnu told them that he would enter Purukutsa's body and thus destroy the gandharvas. The nagas sent the river Narmada to bring Purukutsa down to the underworld and Purukutsa destroyed all the gandharvas. The happy snakes granted Narmada a boon. Whoever says, "I pray to Narmada morning and evening; Narmada, protect me from snake poison, " will never be bitten by snakes.

In the same dynasty was born King Vahu. Vahu lost a war with some other kings and went to the forest with his wife. There Vahu's wife was about to give birth to a baby. But Vahu had another wife as well. And out of jealousy, the second wife gave the first wife some poison. The result was that the baby did not come out but stayed inside the

mother for seven years. King Vahu died in the hermitage of the sage Ourva. And Vahnu's wife also wished to die on the funeral pyre.

But Ourva told her, "Queen, what are you doing? You are carrying a son who will be the bravest of the brave. He will conquer many lands and perform many sacrifices. Don't die on the funeral pyre."

The son was born and Ourva named the child Sagara. He taught the boy the Vedas, the shastras and the art of fighting. When he grew up, Sagara wished to win back his father's lost kingdom. He defeated the enemy kings and ruled over the entire world.

Sagara had two wives, Sumati and Keshini. These two prayed to Ourva that they might have sons. Ourva granted them the boon that one of them would have a single son, while the other would have sixty thousand sons. This is what happened and Keshini's son was called Asamanjas. But all these sons turned out to be quite evil. The gods went to the sage Kapila and asked him to rescue the world from the bad deeds of Sagara's sons.

At the time, King Sagara was performing an ashvamedha yajna (horse sacrifice) and his sons were the protectors of the sacrificial horse. Someone stole this horse and took it down to the underworld. The sons of Sagara looked for the horse and followed its trail down to the underworld. They found the horse wandering around in the underworld and not far from the house, they saw the sage Kapila. They concluded that Kapila must have stolen the horse and attacked the sage with their weapons. But a terrible fire issued out of Kapila's eyes and reduced Sagara's sons into ashes.

Asamanjas had a son known as Amshumana. On learning that this sons had been burnt into ashes, Sagara sent Amshumana to fetch the horse. Amshumana went to Kapila and began to pray to him. Pleased at this, Kapila offered to grant Amshumana a boon and Amshumana desired that his uncles might go to heaven.

Kapila said, "Your grandson will bring down the river Ganga from heaven. When the water of the Ganga touches the bones of your uncles, they will ascend to heaven."

Amshumana's son was Dilipa and Dilipa's son was Bhagiratha. It was Bhagiratha who brought Ganga down from heaven. That is why Ganga is also known as Bhagirathi.

Soudasa

In Bhagiratha's line there was a king called Soudasa or Mitrasaha. One day the king went out hunting in the forest and saw two tigers there. He killed one of these with his arrow and before dying, it adopted the form of a fierce rakshasa. The other tiger said, "I will have my revenge" and disappeared.

Some days later, King Soudasa began a yajna. The priest for this yajna was the sage Vashishtha. Vashishtha finished his rituals and left. But the rakshasa adopted Vashishtha's form and sat down in Vashishtha's place. "At the end of the ceremony get me some rice and meat to eat," he said. "I am returning in a short while." Having said this, the rakshasa went away. But it adopted the form of a cook and cooked some human meat. Unknowingly, King Soudasa placed this meat in a golden vessel and waited for Vashishtha's return.

When Vashishtha sat down to eat, he was served this meat. In a trice he realized that this was human meat, and he cursed that Soudasa would become a rakshasa. But through his mental powers Vashishtha also learnt that much of the trouble had been caused not by Soudasa, but by the rakshasa. So he reduced the duration of the curse such that Soudasa would have to be a rakshasa only for twelve years.

But Soudasa still thought that he had been unfairly cursed. So he took some water in his hand and prepared to curse Vashishtha. At this, Soudasa's wife Madayanti said, "What are you doing? Don't curse Vashishtha. He is our guru."

Soudasa refrained from uttering the curse. But what was to be done with the water that he had taken in his hand? Since it was water meant for a curse, if it were to be thrown onto the ground or up into the sky, the grain and the clouds would be destroyed. So Soudasa poured the water onto his own feet and his feet became diseased and black. He came to be known as kalmashapada.

As a rakshasa, Kalmashapada lived in the forest and ate people. In the forest he once met a brahmana and his wife. He proceeded to eat the brahmana, although his wife begged him for mercy. At this, the brahmana's wife cursed him that he would die as soon as he met his own wife.

After twelve years the king was freed of Vashishtha's curse. But he refrained from going near his wife because of the other curse.

In this line was born Rama, who destroyed Ravana. Rama's brothers were Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna. Bharata destroyed three crores of gandharvas. Shatrughna defeated a rakshasa named Lavana and built the city of Mathura. Rama's sons were Kusha and Lava, Lakshmana's son were Taksha and Pushkara and Shatrughna's sons were Suvahu and Sharasena.

Nimi

Ikshvaku had a son named Nimi. Nimi once started a yajna that went on for a thousand years. He wanted Vashishtha to be the main priest. But Vashishtha said that he was

already busy with the yajna that Indra planned to conduct for five hundred years. He asked Nimi to wait. He promised to come to Nimi's yajna as soon as Indra's was over.

Nimi returned without saying anything and Vashishtha assumed that Nimi had agreed to wait. But Nimi began his ceremony with Goutama and other sages. After finishing Indra's yajna, Vashishtha came to Nimi's yajna expecting to be the chief priest there. But he found that the sacrifice had already been begun with Goutama as the chief priest. Since he felt insulted, Vashishtha cursed Nimi that he would henceforth be without a body. Nimi felt this curse to be unfair. So he too cursed that Vashishtha would be without a body. Vashishtha however, received another body. Thanks to the gods Mitra and Varuna.

Meanwhile, King Nimi's body lay there, oiled and perfumed. When the yajna was over, the assembled gods wished to give the host of the yajna a boon. They wished to give Nimi a new body but Nimi said that he would have none of it. He desired instead that he might be allowed to live on the eyelids of people. This boon was granted. Nimi lives on the eyelids of all people and that is why the blinking of the eyelids is known as nimesha.

But Nimi had no son and the kingdom would have gone to ruins in the absence of a son. So the sages pounded the dead body with wood and a son emerged. Since he came out in this fashion from his father's body he came to be known as Janaka (father). And since his father had no body, Janaka was also called Vaidha (bodyless). When Janaka was ploughing the earth to obtain a son, a daughter came out of the earth. She was named Sita.

Chandra

Having heard accounts of the kings of the solar dynasty, Maitreya wished to hear of the kings of the lunar dynasty, Parashara obliged.

Brahma's son was Atri and Atri's son was Chandra. Brahma made Chandra the ruler of stars and herbs. Chandra performed a rajasuya yajna (royal sacrifice). But because he successfully completed a rajasuya yajna, Chandra became arrogant. The guru of all the devas was Brihaspati and Brihaspati's wife was Tara. Chandra kidnapped Tara. Despite Brihaspati's repeatedly requesting him to return Tara, Chandra refused. A war began between the two sides. Since Shukra did not like Brihaspati, Shukra took Chandra's side. Also on Chandra's side were the danavas. Rudra and Indra sided with Brihaspati.

Since the war took place over Tara, it came to be known as the tarakamaya war. It was a terrible war and it seemed as if the whole world might be destroyed. The entire world asked Brahma to mediate and stop the war. Brahma stopped the war and returned Tara to Brihaspati.

But Chandra and Tara had a son and this son was called Budha. Budha married Ila and their son was called Pururava. Mitra and Varuna once cursed the apsara Urvashi that she would have to spend some time on earth. Urvashi to be his wife and Urvashi accepted, subject to a condition. Two sheep were to stay forever near her bed and if the sheep were to be ever stolen, Urvashi would return to heaven. Pururava readily agreed. They lived quite happily for sixty thousand years.

Urvashi had no desire to return to heaven. But in Urvashi's absence the gandharvas of heaven felt very lonely; they plotted ways of taking Urvashi back to heaven. One night they stole the two sheep. And since the condition was broken, Urvashi went back to heaven. Pururava and Urvashi however, had six sons, the eldest being Ayu.

But to remind Pururava of Urvashi, the gandharvas taught him the secret of fire and the king was instructed to divide this fire into three types. Earlier there used to be only one sort of fire. But Pururava introduced the three types of fire known as Garhapatya, Ahavaniya and Dakshina.

In Pururava's line was born Jahnu. Jahnu once saw that the bowl he used for his yajna was flooded with the water of the Ganga. He thereupon drank up the entire Ganga and restored the river only when the devarshis so requested. That is why Ganga is also called Jahnvi.

Satyavati and Richika

Gadhi was descended from Jahnu. Gadhi had a daughter called Satyavati. The sage Richika wanted to marry Satyavati. But Gadhi had no desire to marry off his daughter to an old brahmana who was also very hot-tempered. So he demanded one thousand horses were to be fleet of foot and white in colour with black ears. But Richika managed to get such horses from Varuna and thus married Satyavati.

Satyavati wanted a son. So Richika performed a yajna and obtained some rice pudding as a result. But Satyavati wished that her mother might also have a son. Richika, therefore, prepared a second bowl of rice pudding. He gave the two bowls to Satyavati and said, "This is for you and this for your mother." He then went off to the forest.

But Satyavati's mother said to her daughter, "Usually people want good sons for themselves, they are not keen about obtaining a good brother-in-law. I therefore suspect that your rice pudding is better than mine. Let us exchange bowls. I am a queen and my son will rule the world. He has to be strong. Your son will be a brahmana. He does not have to be that powerful." They exchanged the bowls.

Richika came back from the forest and heard what had happened. He was very angry. Into Satyavati's mother's bowl he had put the ingredients for a son who would be brave

and violent as a kshatriya should be. And into Satyavati's bow he had put the ingredients for a son who would be peaceful and non-violent as a brahmana should be. As it was, everything had now been reversed.

On hearing this, Satyavati begged forgiveness and requested that her grandson, rather than her son, should be brave and violent. This request Richika granted. Satyavati's mother gave birth to Vishvamitra. And Satyavati gave birth to Jamadagni. Jamadagni married Renuka. Their son Parashurama killed many kshatriyas.

Raji

Pururava's son Ayu had five sons. Their names were Nahusha, Kshatravridha, Rambha, Raji and Anenah. Raji had five hundred brave sons. Many years ago, the devas and the asuras fought a war. Both the devas and the asuras went to Brahma and asked, "Who will win this war?" Brahma replied that the side for which King Raji fought would win.

The asuras came to Raji and asked him to fight on their side. "I will," said Raji, "provided that you make me Indra after the devas have been defeated.

"This we cannot do," replied the asuras. "We cannot promise you one thing and do another. Prahlada will be our Indra."

The gods too came to Raji and asked him to fight on their side. And faced with the same condition, they replied. "Yes indeed, you will be our Indra."

Raji fought on the side of the gods and killed the demons. After the enemy had been defeated, Indra touched Raji's feet and said, "You have protected us, so you are like my father. And since I am Indra, my father is obviously the supreme ruler of the world." Although Raji saw through the flattery, he permitted Indra to continue as the king of the gods and returned to his capital.

But after Raji died, Raji's sons demanded that Indra should hand over that which had been promised to them. This Indra refused to do. So Raji's sons defeated Indra and themselves assumed the title of Indra. After many years had passed, Indra went to Brihaspati and prayed that his kingdom might be returned to him. Brihaspati performed sacrifices so that Indra's powers might increase and slowly weaned Raji's sons away from the path of righteousness. He made them do evil deeds and turned their minds against the Vedas and the brahmanas. Indra could now easily defeat and kill the sons of Raji. Indra could now easily defeat and kill the sons of Raji. He assumed the title of Indra.

Nahusha and Yayati

Nahusha had six sons. Their names were Yati, Yayati, Samyati, Ayati, Viviyati and Kriti. Yati had no desire to be king, so Yayati became king after Nahusaha. Yayati had two wives. The first was Shukra's daughter Devayani and the second was Vrishaparva's daughter Sharmishtha. Devayanai's sons were Yadu and Turnvasu. And Sharmishtha's sons were Druhya, Anu and Puru.

Because of a curse imposed on him by Shukra, Yayati became old much before he should have been. He called his eldest son Yadu to him and said, "I have become old much before my time. I still want to enjoy material things. Please take my old age for a thousand years." Yadu refused and Yayati cursed him that no son worthy of being a king would ever be born in the line of Yadu. Yayati asked Turvasu, Druhya and Anu. But they too refused and were given the same curse by their father. Yayati asked Puru and Puru immediately agreed to his father's request. He took upon himself his father's old age and gave his father his own youth.

Yayati immersed himself in material pursuits. But after having spent many such years in enjoying life, he got tired of it all. He got back his old age from Puru and returned Puru's youth to him. Yayati made Puru the king and went off to do tapasya in the forest. Turvasu, Druhya and Anu merely received very small kingdoms that surrounded Puru's kingdom.

In Yadu's line was born Arjuna. This Arjuna prayed to Dattatreya and obtained several boons from him. The first boon was that Arjuna would have a thousand arms. The second was that he would fight adharma and serve the cause of dharma, fight the evil and serve the good. The third was that enemies would not be able to defeat him. And the fourth and final boon was that Arjuna would be killed by someone who would be famous throughout the world. This Arjuna came to be known as Kartaviryarjuna. He performed ten thousand yajnas and ruled for eight-five thousand years. The name of his capital was Mahishmati. Once Ravana invaded this city and was defeated and imprisoned by Arjuna. Eventually Arjuna was killed by Parashurama. All who were descended from Yadu, were known as Yadavas.

The Jewel Syamantaka

Krishna's wife was Satyabhama and Satyabhama's father was Satrajit.

Satrajit sat down on the shores of the ocean and began to pray to Surya. Surya was pleased with his prayers and appeared before Satrajit.

Satrajit could not see Surya very well and said, "Lord, the sky you appear like a burning ball of fire. Yet you have appeared before me and I am not able to see much."

Surya was wearing a jewel known as a syamantaka on his throat. On hearing what Satrajit had said, Surya took off this jewel and laid it aside. Satrajit could now see Surya properly. Surya's eyes were brownish yellow and his body was birht, short and of a copper colour. Satrajit bowed down before Surya and Surya offered to grant him a boon. As a boon. Satrajit wanted the jewel and Surya granted this wish.

Satrajit put it round his neck and entered the city of Dvaraka. But because he was wearing the jewel, his body was radiant and energy seemed to flow out of him. The citizens of Dvaraka at first thought that it was Surya himself who was entering the city.

Satrajit kept the jewel in his house. Every day it produced gold. And thanks to its influence, disease, drought, wild animals, fire and theft disappeared from the kingdom. Krishna thought that the syamantaka jewel should really belong to the king, Ugrasena. Satrajit was aware of this desire of Krishna's. Scared that he might be compelled to part with the jewel, he gave it to his brother Prasena for safe keeping. The jewel had the property that if someone pure held it, it would produce gold. But if someone impure held it, it would kill the holder.

One day Prasena wore the jewel around his neck and went off on a hunt. In the forest he was killed by a lion. The lion was about to go off with the jewel, when Jambavan, the king of the bears, arrived on the scene. Jambavan killed the lion and took the jewel. He returned to his home land gave it to his young son to play with.

Meanwhile, the citizens of Dvaraka noticed that Prasena was not returning from the hunt. There was a general impression that Krishna had had his eyes on the jewel. So a rumour went around that it was Krishna who had killed Prasena and stolen the syamantaka. To put an end to such rumours, Krishna followed Prasena's trail into the forest. There he discovered Prasena's trail into the forest. There he discovered two dead bodies, Prasena's and the lion's. He guessed what must have happened. He followed the trail right upto Jambavan's hole and discovered Jambavan's son playing with the jewel. The child's nursemaid raised an alarm on seeing Krishna and Jambavan quickly arrived. A terrible fight raged between Krishna and Jambavan. This fight went on for twenty-one days. Several Yadava soldiers had also followed Krishna upto Jambavan's hole. When seven or eight days had passed and still there was no sign of Krishna, they concluded that Krishna must have been killed. They, therefore, spread the news of Krishna's death.

Krishna's friends arranged a shraddha ceremony and the offerings made at this funeral ceremony served to increase Krishna's strength. Krishna finally defeated Jambavan and Jambavan bowed down before him, The two became friends and Jambavan married off his daughter Jambavati to Krishna. He also returned the syamantaka jewel.

The citizens of Dvaraka were delighted to see Krishna and Jambavati. Krishna told them what had happened and returned the jewel to Satrajit. Satrajit was ashamed that he had ever doubted Krishna. He therefore gave his daughter Satyabhama in marriage to Krishna.

But there were other Yadavas like Akrura, Kritavarma and Shatadhanva who had also wanted to marry Satyabhama and they were not at all happy at this turn of events. They thought that they had been insulted. Hearing that the Pandavas had been burnt to death in the house of Iac, Krishna went on a trip to Varanavata. Taking advantage of Krishna's absence, Shatadhanva killed Satrajit while the latter was sleeping and stole the jewel.

Satyabhama was furious that her father had been killed. She got up on her chariot and drove it to Varanavata to tell Krishna what had happened. Krishna came back to Dvaraka and told Baladeva that the two of them should get together and kill Shatadhanva. Shatadhanva ran for help to Kritavarma, but Kritavarma refused to oppose Krishna and Baladeva. Shatadhanva then, ran to Akrura, only to be met with another refusal. Shatadhanva then asked Akrura to at least keep the jewel for him. This Akrura agreed to do, provided that Shatadhanva did not tell anyone where the jewel was.

Shatadhanva got up on a fast horse and fled. But Krishna and Baladeva followed him on a chariot. After travelling for a long distance, Shatadhanva came to the forests on the outskirts of Mithila. His horse died. He started to flee on foot. At this, Krishna said that he would follow Shatadhanva on foot. He asked Baladeva to wait for him in the chariot.

Krishna caught up with Shatadhanva and sliced off his head. But despite searching all Shatadhanva's belongings, he could not find the jewel. He came and reported this to Baladeva. But unfortunately, Baladeva did not believe this. He said, "Krishna, you are not a brother I would like to associate with. Go your own way and I will go mine. We do not belong together." Baladeva went off to the kingdom of Videha and lived there as a guest of King Janaka's. It was then that Duryodhana learnt from Baladeva how to fight with the mace (gada). Krishna returned to Dvaraka. After three years had passed. Vabhru., Ugrasena and the other Yadavas managed to convince Baladeva that Krishna had indeed not stolen the jewel. Baladeva then returned to Dvaraka.

Meanwhile, Akrura started to perform many yajnas. It is a crime to kill someone who is performing a yajna. Akrura reasoned that even if Krishna got to know that he possessed the jewel, Krishna would not kill him as long as he was performing a sacrifice. The sacrifices went on for sixty-two years. And because the jewel was in Dvaraka, disease and other evil things disappeared from the city.

But some relatives of Akrura's killed some other Yadavas and fled the city. Akrura also fled with them. And the moment this happened, wild beasts, drought and disease

returned to Dvaraka. At first people thought that this was happening because a holy man like Akrura had left the city. Akrura was therefore brought back and immediately the wild beasts, drought and disease disappeared.

Krishna, however, reasoned that all this could not be happening simply because Akrura was a holy man. There must be more to it than that. How was it that Akrura performed one yajna after another? Where did he get the money? He was not a rich man. He must therefore have the jewel.

Krishna called an assembly of the Yadavas in his house. And there he told Akrura. "We all know that Shatadhanva had left the syamantaka jewel with you. Let the jewel remain with you, there is no harm in that. We are all gaining from its presence here in the city. But Baladeva suspects that I have stolen it. Will you please show it to him once to set his suspicions at rest?"

Akrura reasoned that if he lied, they might search his clothes and discover the jewel. So he took out the jewel from a golden box that he kept hidden inside his clothes. He offered it to the Yadava who was most worthy of it.

The jewel was so attractive that Baladeva also began to covet it. So did Satyabhama, since she thought that if the jewel had belonged to her father it was now rightfully hers. Krishna felt that a quarrel was imminent and intervened. He said, "this jewel brings happiness to the kingdom only if someone pure wears it. If someone impure wears it, the wearer is destroyed. I should not wear it, I am not really pure, I have sixteen thousand wives. For the same reason, let not Satyahama possess it. Nor should Baladeva have it, he drinks all the time. Let the jewel stay with Akrura." And this was agreed to.

Shishupala

In an earlier life, Shishupala had been Hiranayakashipu. He was subsequently born as Shishupala, the son of Dama Ghosha, the King of Chedi. His mother was Shrutashrava, the sister of Vasudeva, Krishna's father. Just as Hiranyakashipu was killed by Vishnu, Shishupala was killed by Krishna. Shishupala had also been born as Ravana and had been killed by Rama.

Shantanu and Devapi

In the line of Kuru there used to be a king known as Pratipa. Pratipa had three sons, Devapi, Shantanu and Vahlika. Devapi left for the forest when he was very young and Shantanu became king.

For twelve years there was no rain in Shantanu's kingdom. To find out why, King Shantanu called all the brahmanas. The brahmanas explained that this was happening

because Devapi should rightfully have been the king. An elder son is the person who should rule, unless of course the elder son happens to be an outright sinner. To make the rains come, it was thus imperative that Devapi should be brought back as king.

Shantanu had a minister named Ashmasari. This minister sent a preacher to Devapi in the forest. The preacher preached against the Vedas. Slowly the preacher turned Devapi's mind away from the holy texts. When the brahmanas and Shantanu went to the forest to offer the kingdom to Devapi, they found that Devapi was saying various things that were against the Vedas. Devapi had thus become a sinner and the kingdom was not offered to him. Shantanu continued to be the king and now it rained.

Shantanu and Ganga married and they had a son called Bhishma. Shantanu also married Satyawati and had two sons called Vichitravirya and Chitrangada. Dhritarashtra and Pandu were descended from Vichitravirya. The five sons of Pandu, the Pandavas, married Draupadi and Draupadi's sons were Prativindhya, Sutasoma, Shrutakirti, Shantanika and Shrutakarma. The Pandavas had other sons as well. Yudhishtira married Draupadi and had a son called Dhishma. Bhima married Hidimba and had a son called Ghatotkacha. He also married Kashi and had a son called Sarvatraga. Nakula married Karenumati and had a son called Nirmitta. Sahadeva married Vijaya and had a son called Suhotra. Arjuna had many wives. From Ulupi he had a son called Iravan, from Chitrangada he had a son called Babhravahana and from Subhadra he had a son called Abhimanyu.

Kali

The Vishnu Purana says that in future there will be a king called Mahapadmanada. Like a second Parashurama, he will destroy all the kshatriyas. The shudras will then become kings. Mahapadma will have eight sons and he and his sons will rule the earth for a hundred years. But a brahmana named Koutilya will kill all of them, and the shudra kings known as the Mouryas will rule. Koutilya will make Chandragupta king.

The Maura kings will rule for a hundred and thirty-seven years. Then the Shunga kings will rule for a hundred and twelve years. After that the Kanva kings will rule for forty-five years. Then the Andhra kings will rule for four hundred and fifty-six years. Then there will be various dynasties known as the Abhiras, Gardhabhilas, Shakas, Yavanas, Tukharas, Mundas, Mounas, Pouras, Kailakilas, Vahlikas, Nishadas, Nagas, Magadhas and Guptas.

The kali era will be a terrible period. Subjects will flee to the mountains because they will not be able to bear the taxes levied by the kings. They will not have food to eat and clothes to wear. Dharma will be destroyed. Vishnu will be born again as Kalki to destroy all the evil-doers. It is after this that dharma will be established. Kali yuga will last for three lakh and sixty thousand years.

This is the end of the fourth section of the Vishnu Purana.

Vasudeva and Devaki

Vasudeva married Devaka's daughter Devaki. Kamsa drove the chariot of the couple on the occasion of the marriage. At that time, divine words were heard from the sky. A voice said, "Stupid Kamsa, whom are you driving in the chariot? The eighth child of this woman is going to kill you."

When he heard this, Kamsa took up his sword and wanted to kill Devaki. But Vasudeva said, "Brave warrior, do not kill Devaki. Rest assured that I will hand over to you all the children who are born." Kamsa agreed to this arrangement.

At that time, Prithivi (the earth) went to the gods on Mount Sumeru and complained. She said that the daityas who had been born on earth were creating havoc there. Many years ago, a daitya known as Kalanemi had been destroyed by Vishnu. This Kalanemi had now been born as Kamsa, the son of Ugrasena. He had got together with other evil and powerful kings like Arishta, Dhenuka, Keshi, Pralamba, Naraka, Sunda and Vanasura. All this oppression was proving to be too much for the earth.

Brahman corroborated what the earth had said. He said, "Let us all go to the northern shores of the great ocean and pray to Vishnu there. Whenever something like this happens, Vishnu is born on earth to protect the cause of dharma."

On hearing these prayers, Vishnu appeared before Brahma and the other gods. He heard what the gods had to say and tore off two hairs from his head. "These two hairs of mine will be born on earth to destroy the asuras," he said. "And all these other gods will also be born on earth to fight with the asuras." Before disappearing, he also added, "I shall be born as the eighth child of Devaki."

Kamsa heard all this from the sage Narada. He was furious and imprisoned Vasudeva and Devaki. One by one, six sons were born to Devaki and Kamsa killed each of these sons. Vasudeva had another wife known as Rohini who lived in Gokula. The seventh son was magically transferred from Devaki to Rohini so that Kamsa never got a chance to kill it. This son grew up to be Sankarshana.

When Vishnu entered Devaki's body, Devaki looked so bright that no one could bear to glance at her. Krishna was finally born during the monsoon in the month of Shraavana. (The accounts in different Puranas do not always agree. In some other accounts, it is stated that Krishna was born in the month of Bhadra.) The actual date was the eighth day of Krishnapaksha. He was born right at the stroke of midnight. All the sages were happy at this birth, the winds and the rivers became peaceful. The gandharvas sang and the apsaras danced. The gods showered down flowers from the sky.

Since there was the danger that Kamsa might kill the baby, Vasudeva, proposed to leave the child somewhere else. The guards slept, the prison door opened and the chains fell away by the grace of Vishnu. It was raining furiously that night. But a great snake held up its hood to protect Vasudeva and the baby. Vasudeva had to cross the river Yamuna which was very deep. But thanks to Vishnu, the water never rose above his thighs. Vasudeva crossed the river and met Nanda and other cowherds. Yashoda had given birth to a daughter known as Yogamaya. Vasudeva placed Krishna on Yashoda's bed and removed Yogamaya. He then returned to the prison with Yogamaya.

The guards woke up and reported to Kamsa that Devaki had given birth to a child. Kamsa rushed to the prison, picked up the baby and threw it down on the stones so as to kill it. But Yogamaya was really a goddess who had been sent by Vishnu. When Kamsa threw her down, the baby rose up into the air and adopted the eight-armed form of the goddess. "Stupid Kamsa." She said, "the person who will kill has already been born. It was the one who had killed you in your last birth." So saying, Yogamaya disappeared into the sky.

Kamsa called all his evil friends together and said, "My friends, the mischievous devas are trying to get me killed, but because I am brave, I am not going to pay any attention to this. Have you not seen how Indra fled like a coward before my arrows? In this whole world I am not scared of anyone other than my guru Jarasandha. These attempts of the devas made me laugh. Nevertheless, one has to be careful as I have been told that Devaki's son will kill me. We have to kill any male child who seems to be unduly strong."

He was no further point in detaining Vasudeva and Devaki. He released them and said, "I have unnecessarily killed your children but that must have been their fate. The person who is to kill me must have been born somewhere else."

The Death of Putana and Other Incidents

Nanda and the other cowherds had come to Mathura to pay taxes to the king. Upon his release, Vasudeva congratulated Nanda for the birth of Nanda's son. He did not tell Nanda that the son was really his. He told Nanda to quickly return to Gokula and take care of Nanda's own son as well as Vasudeva's other son who was with Rohini.

The cowherds returned to Gokula. One night in Gokula, Putana came to feed the young Krishna. Putana was evil. The limbs of any child she fed at night got destroyed. But Krishna grasped Putana and began to drink her life out of her. With a thunderous noise Putana fell down and died.

Another time, the baby Krishna was lying down under a cart. He felt very hungry and was crying and kicking his legs up in the air. As a result of his kicking, the cart got

overturned and all the pots and vats that were on the cart got broken. Everyone came running to see what had happened. They were very surprised to find that such a small baby had overturned a huge cart. Yoshada worshipped the cart with curds, flowers and fruit.

The sage Garga came to Gokula and named the two sons. Rohini's son was named Rama and Yoshada's son was named Krishna. Soon the babies learnt to crawl, and smeared with cowdung, roamed around everywhere. They went into the cowsheds and pulled the tails of calves.

On one particular day Yoshada got tired of all this. She got hold of some ropes and tied up Krishna to a thresher. Then she went away to do her housework. Krishna pulled and tugged at the thresher. There were two big arjuna trees that grew not very far away. Krishna dragged the thresher to these trees and tried to pass through the space between them. But the thresher got stuck in the space between the two arjuna trees. And as Krishna pulled and tugged, the huge trees were uprooted from the ground. And Krishna sat there amongst the wreckage, smiling. The rope that Yoshada had tied around his stomach was still there. Because a rope is called dama, Krishna came to be known as Damodara.

But the cowherds of Gokula were worried at what they thought were bad omens. First there was the death of Putana, next there was the overturning of the huge cart and finally there was the uprooting of the trees. They were not aware that Krishna was responsible for all this. They thought that some terrible danger was about to befall Gokula. So with their carts and their cattle, they left for Vrindavana.

Rama and Krishna grew up there. They looked after the calves, they played in the fields, they wore peacock feathers on their heads and they played the flute. Amongst their close friends were Shakha and Vishakha.

Kaliya Humbled

Part of the Yamuna river was known as the spot of Kaliya. Kaliya was a huge snake that lived in the water. Because the snake lived at that spot, all the trees along the banks were scorched. And if any birds flew over the area and the spray of the water struck them, the birds immediately died. Krishna realized that his snake was none other than the snake which had been defeated by Garuda in the ocean. It had now fled from the ocean and had made a home in the Yamuna. The result was that no one could drink the water of the Yamuna at the spot.

Krishna resolved to kill the snake. He tied his clothes firmly around his body and jumped into the water from a kadamba tree. As Krishna jumped into the river, the spray struck

the trees along the bank and because the spray was poisoned by the poison of the snake, the trees began to burn.

Krishna began to swim in the water. On hearing the sound, Kaliya quickly arrived there. His eyes were red with anger and flames issued out of his mouth. He was surrounded on all sides by poisonous snakes and the wives of those snakes also accompanied them. All the snakes coiled round Krishna's body and began to bite and inject venom into him.

Some cowherds saw Krishna in the water, surrounded by snakes. They rushed back to Vrindavana and told everyone what they had seen. Nanda, Yoshada, Rama and the others all came running to the banks of the river. "Where is Krishna, where is Krishna?", screamed Yoshada.

They all saw Krishna in the water in the midst of the snakes. The women began to cry. Some of them proposed that they should also kill themselves if Krishna had indeed died. Hearing all this commotion, Balarama indicated to Krishna that it was high time that he killed the snake.

Krishna then shook off the coils of the snake. He lowered Kaliya's hood and climbed up on the top of the hood. There he began to dance. At this the hood began to bleed. Whenever the snake tried to raise his hood, Krishna stamped down with his feet. The snake became unconscious and began to vomit blood. The head and the neck broke and blood began to issue out of these parts as well.

Kaliya's wives then prayed to Krishna. They begged for mercy. They asked him to spare Kaliya's life. Kaliya also started to pray to Krishna. At this, Krishna spared the snake. But the condition was that Kaliya and his servants and relatives would have to leave the waters of the Yamuna and go back to the ocean. Henceforth, the mark of Krishna's feet would stay on Kaliya's hood. And seeing this mark Garuda would not pester Kaliya any more.

The waters of the Yamuna were purified.

The Killing of Dhenukasura

One day, Balarama and Krishna were wandering around in the forest and came to a grove where there were a lot of tala trees. A daitya who looked like a donkey lived there and survived on deer meat. His name was Dhenuka.

The tala trees were full of rich fruit and the other cowherds wished to help themselves to the fruit. The problem, however, was Dhenukasura, who guarded the tala trees. The cowherds, therefore, requested Balarama and Krishna to pluck some fruit for them. This the two brothers proceeded to do. But as the fruit fell on the ground, the sound attracted the angry Dhenuka who arrived on the scene. With its hind legs the donkey kicked

Balarama in the chest. But Balarama caught hold of those legs and began to twirl the donkey round and round. At this, the donkey died and Balarama flung the dead body on the tala trees.

Many other daityas in the form of donkeys also arrived. But Krishna and Balarama killed all of them

The tala grove became safe and cattle began to graze there once again.

The Killing of Pralamba

After killing Dhenukasura, Krishna and Balarama reached a banyan tree. They played and plucked flowers. They wore garlands. Ropes for tying cattle were round their shoulders. Their clothes were in golden and black hues.

Sometimes they rode on swings, sometimes they wrestled, sometimes they flung stones.

An asura known as Pralamba adopted the form of a cowherd and joined the games. Pralamba thought that Krishna might be too strong to kill, so he decided to kill Balarama. The boys were playing at a special sort of race then. Two boys would race upto a point and whoever was the loser would have to run again with the winner on his shoulders. Krishna defeated Shridama at this race. And when Balarama and Pralamba raced, Balarama defeated Pralamba. This meant that Pralamba would have to carry Balarama upon his shoulders. But as soon as Balarama got up on Pralamba's shoulders, Pralamba began to run away. He adopted the size of a huge mountain and his eyes were as large as cart-wheels.

Balarama cried out, "Krishna, I am being kidnapped. What will I do?"

"Why ask me," Krishna replied. "You are strong enough. Kill the asura."

Balarama's eyes became red with anger. He beat down on the asura's head with his fists and the asura died. Blood flowed out of his mouth.

Govardhana

This happened one autuman.

The cowherds decided to have a yajna to honour Indra. Indra was the ruler of the waters and it was he who sent the clouds. Without the clouds there would be no rain and without rain there would be no grain. What would the cattle eat in that case? This was the reason why the cowherds wanted to worship Indra.

But Krishna told Nanda, "Father, we are not farmers or traders. We live through animal husbandry, we live in the forests. Our gods should be cattle and the mountains. Let us stop this worship of Indra and let us instead worship the mountain Govardhana."

Nanda and the other cowherds agreed to this and that was how giri yajna (mountain ceremony) started. Curds, rice pudding and meat were offered to the mountain. Hundreds and thousands of brahmanas and guests were fed.

But Indra was very angry because his yajna had been stopped and he called the clouds to him. "Listen to what I say," he instructed them. "Destroy the cattle with rain and wind. I will come on Airavata and pour down rain as well."

Wind and rain started. The clouds were everywhere. There was lightning. And thunder and heavy rain. The world became dark and there was water everywhere. Cows and calves began to die.

Krishna had to do something to protect these unfortunate beings. So he uprooted Govardhana mountain and held it aloft like an umbrella. The entire mountain was thus balanced on only one of Krishna's hands. The cowherds and the cattle took refuge under the mountain and in the holes that were there. For seven nights Indra showered down rain. But after that he gave up and Krishna returned the mountain to original place.

Having been defeated in his purpose, Indra appeared before Krishna. "You have saved the cattle," he said. "You are like their Indra. Therefore, from now on, you will be known as Govinda."

Indra took down a bell from Airavata's neck. He filled it with holy water and anointed Krishna. And he said, "My son Arjuna has been born on earth. Please look after him and take care of him."

Krishna assured Indra that he would do so. The two embraced and parted ways.

Various Exploits

By then the cowherds had realized that Krishna was no ordinary man. They were slightly scared, but Krishna comforted them and told them that he was their friend.

One day, an asura known as Arishta arrived there. This asura had the form of a bull. The bull was dark as the clouds. The horns were sharp and pointed and his eyes were bright as the sun. He tore up the ground with his hooves. He was so tall that it was impossible to climb over him. This bull used to kill the calves and the sages.

Everyone was frightened at Arishta's arrival. But Krishna clapped his hands. On hearing the sound of the clap, Arishta charged at Krishna with horns lowered. Krishna grasped

the horns and stopped the bull. Then he hit Arishta with his thighs. Finally, he tore off one of the horns and attacked Arishta with it. The daitya vomited blood and died.

Narada related all of Krishna's exploits to Kamsa and Kamsa was enraged. He decided that Balarama and Krishna would have to be killed before they became adults. Kamsa had two strong wrestlers known as Chanura and Mushtika. He plotted to have a wrestling match between Balarama and Krishna and these two wrestlers, and thereby kill the two brothers off. The occasion for this wrestling match would be a yajna that Kamsa would arrange. He would therefore send Akrura to Gokula to bring Balarama and Krishna to Mathura. In addition, he would send an asura known as Keshi to try and kill the two brothers in Gokula itself. A strong elephant called Kubalayapida would also be let loose on the brothers.

Keshi adopted the form of a horse and went to Vrindavana. He tore up the earth with his hooves, he shook the clouds with his mane and he attacked the sun and the moon on his way to Vrindavana. The cowherds were naturally frightened.

But Krishna was there to protect them. He inserted his hands into the horse's mouth and broke off the horse's teeth. Like white clouds, one by one the teeth fell down on the ground. After that, Krishna tore off the asura's lips and the asura began to vomit blood. His eyes fell off. Krishna then tore Keshi into two with his hands. Because Krishna killed Keshi, he came to be known as Keshava.

Meanwhile, Akrura arrived in Gokula and told Balarama and Krishna of Kamsa's invitation. The two brothers accepted the invitation and resolved to go to Mathura. The cowherds were naturally sorry to see Krishna go. They thought that he would never return to Gokula again. In a chariot, Akrura, Balarama and Krishna set out for Mathura.

Mathura and Kamsa

They reached Mathura in the evening. Akrura went ahead to the palace in the chariot, while Balarama and Krishna entered the city on foot. On the street they met a washerman. They asked the washerman for some nice clothes. But the washerman was Kamsa's servant. Not only did he refuse them the clothes, he also abused that two brothers. So Krishna hit the evil washerman with his palm and split his head in two. Balarama and Krishna then took away whatever clothes they wanted. Balarama dressed in blue and Krishna dressed in yellow. They then went to the house of a garland-seller. The garland-seller thought that these two were gods. And when Balarama and Krishna asked for flowers, not only did he give them many flowers, he also worshipped them. Krishna blessed the garland-seller.

On the streets they also met a young woman. The woman was pretty, but had a hump on her back. Her name was Kubja. She carried a salver of sandalwood paste in her hands.

"For whom is the paste?", asked Krishna.

"This is for Kamsa," was the reply. "He has appointed me to make fragrant paste for him."

"Please give us the paste," said Krishna. "This paste is fit for our bodies."

Kubja complied and Balarama and Krishna rubbed the paste on their bodies. Then Krishna grasped Kubja's chin with his index and middle fingers.. He pressed down her feet with his own so that they did not move. As he exerted pressure upwards, Kubja's body straightened and the hump disappeared. Kubja became a beautiful woman.

At the yajna that Kamsa had arranged, a bow was to be worshipped. Krishna and Balarama asked various guards where this bow was being kept. They arrived at that room and Krishna proceeded to tie a string to the bow. But the bow snapped and the sound of the bow snapping was heard throughout the palace. The guards came and attacked Krishna and Balarama, but the two brothers killed all the guards.

By then, Kamsa had got to know that Krishna and Balarama had come to Mathura. So he called Chanura and Mushtika and told them to go and wrestle with the two brothers and kill them. He also called the servant who was in charge of his elephant known as Kubalayapida at the main gate to the palace. It was night. After issuing these instructions, Kamsa waited for morning.

When it was morning, arrangements were made for the wrestling match. There were ordinary seats for ordinary citizens around the arena where the match was to take place. Kings and special guests had special seats reserved for them. Kamsa sat on the highest seat of all. The women sat behind a partition. Amongst the spectators were Nanda and the cowherds, Vasudeva, Akrura and Devaki.

Marital music started to be played. Chanura and Mushtika stood in the middle of the arena, exhibiting their strength. Krishna and Balarama entered the arena. At the main gate they had killed the elephant Kubalayuapida and they carried the bloody tusks in their hands.

The schedule was that Krishna would fight with Chanura and Balarama would fight with Mushtika. The first wrestling match between Krishna and Chanura began. It was a terrible bout to behold. Both were strong fighters. But eventually, Krishna raised Chanura's body aloft and whirled it around a hundred times before throwing Chandura down on the ground. Chanura died. Meanwhile Balarama had started to fight with

Mushtika. He hit Mushtika's head and chest with his fists and thighs. And he grasped Mushtika so hard that the breath of life went out of Mushtika's body. Krishna also killed another wrestler whose name was Toshalaka.

Kamsa was very angry. He instructed his guards to capture Krishna and Balarama and tie them up in iron chains. The guards were also to chain up Vasudeva and the cowherds.

But Krishna merely laughed. He jumped up on the stage where Kamsa was sitting and caught hold of Kamsa's hair. He threw Kamsa down on the ground and Kamsa, the son of Ugrasena, died. Krishna pulled the dead body down to the arena. Kamsa's body was so heavy that a huge pit was created where the dead body was placed.

Kamsa had a brother called Sumali and Sumali attacked Krishna and Balarama. But Balarama killed Sumali very easily. Krishna and Balarama then went and met Vasudeva and Devaki.

Kamsa had imprisoned his own father Ugrasena. Krishna released Ugrasena from the prison and made him king. Krishna also obtained a beautiful assembly hall named Sudharma from Indra. This he represented to King Ugrasena.

Since Kamsa was now dead, it was time for Krishna and Balarama to go to their guru's house for studying. Their guru was a sage named Sandipani, who lived in Kashi. There Krishna and Balarama went to learn amongst other things, the art of fighting. It took them only sixty-four days to learn all this. After the shishya's studies are completed he has to give a dakshina to his guru. Sandipani's son had died and as a guru dakshina, Sandipani desired that his dead son might be brought back to life.

After death, the sage Sandipani's son had gone to the great ocean. Krishna and Balarama took up their weapons and went to the ocean to demand the son. The ocean told them that the son was actually with a daitya named Panchajanya who had the form of a conch-shell. Krishna entered the ocean and killed it. From the skeleton of the daitya was made the conch-shell Panchajanya that Krishna blows. To get back the dead son, Krishna and Balarama also had to go to Yama's world and defeat Yama. They did that and returned the son to the sage Sandipani.

They then returned to Mathura.

Jarasandha

Kamsa had married two of Jarasandh's daughters. These daughters were known as Asti and Prapti. On hearing that Krishna had killed his son-in-law, Jarasandha raised a huge army and attacked the Yadavas. The city of Mathura was under seizure by the king of Magadha.

Krishna and Balarama had only a few soldiers, as compared to Jarasandha's gigantic army. But still they came out to fight. From the sky a bow called Sharnga, two quivers that never ran out of arrows, and a mace named Koumodaki fell into Krishna's hands. For Balarama the weapons were a plough and a club named Sounanda. Jarasandha was defeated by the two brothers and he fled.

After a few days Jarasandha attacked once more and was defeated yet again. This continued. There were eighteen occasions on which Jarasandha attacked and was defeated by the Yadavas.

Kalayavana

There was a brahmana named Gargya who had been insulted and ridiculed by the Yadavas. This brahmana went to the shores of the southern ocean and began to perform tapasya. His desire was a son who would be the scourge of the Yadavas. As part of the tapasya, he ate only iron dust for food. The tapasya went on for twelve years and at the end of it, Mahadeva was pleased. The brahmana obtained the desired boon.

The son who was born was black of hue. The king of the Yavanas had no son and the brahmana's son was adopted by the Yavana king. Eventually, this son became the king of the Yavanas and came to be known as Kalayavana.

Kalayavana wanted to know the names of all the powerful on the earth from Narada. He was told the names of the Yadava kings. So he decided to attack the Yadavas. He collected thousands and thousands of chariots, horses, elephants and infantry. Then he came to Mathura to wage war.

Krishna was worried. He realized that the Yadavas would become weakened from their war with Kalayavana. And if Jarasandha's attack came after that, the Yadavas might even lose at the hands of Jarasandha. On the other hand, if the Yadavas became weak from a war with Jarasandha, they might lose the war with Kalayavana. There was danger from both sides. It was, therefore, necessary to build a strong fort from where the Yadavas could wage a long drawn out war, even in the absence of Krishna. On the shores of the ocean Krishna, therefore, built the city of Dvaraka. There were many gardens and lakes in Dvaraka. But more importantly, it was surrounded by walls and moats on all sides and there were several forts inside the city. All the citizens of Mathura were brought to Dvaraka.

Krishna then appeared before Kalayavana. At the sight of Krishna, Kalayavana began to follow him, desirous of a fight. Krishna had a plan. He went inside the cave where a powerful king known as Muchukunda was sleeping. Kalayavana followed Krishna inside the cave. It was dark inside so that Kayavana could not make out that the person who was sleeping was Muchukunda and not Krishna. So, thinking that it was Krishna,

Kalayavana kicked the body. When the king woke up, the anger in him came out as fire through his eyes and this fire burnt up Kalayavana into ashes.

Many years ago, King Muchukunda had taken part in a fight between the devas and the asuras. After killing many asuras Muchukunda was tired. He craved a boon from the gods that he might sleep for a long period of time. The devas granted the boon and also said that whoever woke up Muchukunda would be burnt into ashes by the flames that would come out of the king's body.

Having burnt up Kalayavana King Muchukunda came out of the cave and found that people were now much shorter than they used to be . He realized that the kali era must have arrived and went off to do tapasya on Mount Gandhamadana.

Kalayavana's soldiers were defeated by Krishna.

Balarama and The River Yamuna

Now that there was peace, Balarama went on a trip to Gokula. There he met all his old friends and thoroughly enjoyed himself.

One day he found that there was wine issuing out of a kadamba tree. Balarama drank a lot of the wine and became drunk. Since he was drunk he had lost control of his senses. He, therefore, told the river Yamuna, "River Yamuna, I feel like having a bath. Change your course and come here so that I may fulfil my desire."

Yamuna ignored this instruction. At this, Balarama was enraged and took up his plough. With his plough he grasped the river and pulled her towards himself, "You won't come , will you?", he said. "Let me see how you can flow where you wish."

The course of the river was changed.

Yamuna appeared before Balarama and begged for forgiveness.

This was granted.

When Balarama's bath was over, Lakshmi appeared before him and gave a garland of lotuses which never fade. She also gave him two pieces of blue clothing.

Balarama returned to Dvaraka after having spent two months in Gokula. He married King Raivata's daughter Revati and had two sons named Nishatha and Ulmuka.

Rukmini and Rukmi

There was a king named Bhishmaka who ruled in the kingdom of Kundina. The king had a son named Rukmi and a daughter named Rukmimi. Krishna and Rukmini wished to

marry each other. But Rukmi did not like Krishna, so he refused to get his sister married off to Krishna.

Bhishmaka was also an ally of Jarasandha's. So he agreed with Rukmi and decided to marry his daughter to Shishupala. All these allies of Jarasandha's went to Kundina to witness the marriage and Krishna and the Yadavas also went there. But one day before the marriage was due to take place, Krishna abducted Rukmini.

Thereupon several kings like Poundraka, Dantavakra, Viduratha, Shishupala, Jarasandha and Shalva attacked the Yadavas so as to kill Krishna. But they were defeated by Balarama and the other Yadavas.

Rukmi resolved, "I will not return to Kundina without killing Krishna." He followed Krishna with many soldiers, horses, elephants, and chariots. But Krishna easily defeated Rukmi.

When Krishna was about to kill Rukmi, Rukmini said, "I have only one brother. Please spare his life."

Krishna spared Rukmi's life. But Rukmi had resolved that he would not return to Kundina without killing Krishna. So he had to build a new city known as Bhojakata where he began to live.

Krishna married Rukmini according to the rakshasa form of marriage. They had a son called Pradyumna who was kidnapped by Shambarasura as soon as he was born. But later, Pradyumna was to kill Shambarasura.

"Tell me this story," asked Maitreya of Parashara.

Shambarasura knew that Pradyumna was destined to kill him. So six days after Pradyumna's birth, he kidnapped the newly born baby and threw it into the ocean. The ocean was full of sharks and crocodiles. The baby might have died, but a fish swallowed it up and the baby was saved. Later on, some fishermen caught the fish and brought it to Shambarasura's kitchen.

Shambarasura had a housekeeper named Mayavati. When the fish was cut, Mayavati found the baby inside. She was very surprised. "Who is this boy and how did he come to be here?", she wondered. She went to Narada to find out who the boy was and Narada told her the entire story. He also told her to ensure that the boy was brought up properly.

This Mayavati proceeded to do. She was well versed in the techniques of maya or illusions and these she taught to Pradyumna. When Pradyumna grew up, she told him the entire story of his birth and kidnapping. Hearing this, Pradyumna challenged

Shambarasura to a duel. Shambarasura used a lot of maya, but thanks to Mayavati, Pradyumna had also learnt the use of maya. So he did manage to kill Shambarasura.

After this, Pradyumna and Mayavati returned to Krishna and Rukmini. Everyone was happy and Pradyumna married Mayavati.

Apart from Pradyumna, Krishna and Rukmini had eight other sons and a daughter. And apart from Rukmini, Krishna had seven other major wives. Their names were Kalindi, Mitravinda, Satya, Jambavati or Rohini, Sushila, Satyabhama, and Lakshmana. The total number of Krishna's wives was sixteen thousand.

Pradyumna married King Rukmi's daughter and had a son named Aniruddha. Aniruddha married Rukmi's grand-daughter. On the occasion of this marriage, Krishna, Balarama and the other Yadavas arrived at Rukmi's capital Bhojakata.

After the marriage was over, some kings told Rukmi, "Balarama is addicted to playing dice, although he cannot play it at all well. Why not arrange match of dice in which we can defeat Balarama?"

Rukmi agreed to this proposition and a match was arranged in which Rukmi played with Balarama. In the first round, Rukmi won four thousand gold pieces off Balarama. This happened a second time and a third time as well. At this, the king of Kalinga and Rukmi began to laugh at Balarama.

Balarama got angry and placed four crores of gold pieces as a bet. Rukmi threw the dice, but this time Balarama won.

"I have won," said Balarama.

"No, you haven't", replied Rukmi. "You did place the bet, but I did not accept it. So you have not really won."

Words were then heard from heaven which said that it was Balarama who was in the right. Although Rukmi had not verbally accepted the bet, his throwing of the dice meant that the bet was acceptable to him.

This roused Balarama's anger and he picked up a dice and killed Rukmi with it. He also caught hold of the king of Kalinga and broke off the king's teeth. It was with these teeth that the king of Kalinga had laughed at Balarama. Many were the other kings whom Balarama killed on this occasion.

The Killing of Narakasura

Once Indra came to Davaraka on the elephant Airavata. He met Krishna and complained about the behaviour of a daitya named Narakasura.

This Narakasura was the son of Prithivi and the king of Pragjyotishapura. He was oppressing all living beings. He was kidnapping the daughters of devas, asuras and kings and imprisoning them in his house. Naraka had also stolen Varuna's umbrella from which the rains came, and the peak of Mount Mandara. In addition he had robbed Indra's mother Aditi of her earrings and was now threatening to steal Airavata.

Krishna decided to do something about Naraksura. He thought of Garuda and immediately, Garuda appeared before him. Krishna and Satyabhama got onto Garuda and flew towards Pragjyotishapura. There was an asura named Muru who had installed many sharp stakes around Naraka's city. But Krishna sliced off these stakes with his sudarshana chakra. And when Muru attacked him, Krishna killed Muru and his seven thousand sons with the chakra. He also killed two others. Hayagriva and Panchajana, and arrived at Pragyotishapura.

A terrible war raged between the armies of Narakasura and Krishna. Krishna killed thousands and thousands of asuras and sliced Narakasura in two with his chakra.

Inside Narakasura's palace Krishna found sixteen thousand and one hundred women whom Narakasura had imprisoned. There were also several horses and six thousand elephants with four tusks each. All of these Krishna sent to Dvaraka. Krishan put the other things that Naraka had stolen on Garuda and proceeded towards heaven to return them to their rightful owners.

The Taking of Parijata

Krishna arrived at the gates of heaven and blew upon his conch shell. The gods came out to worship Krishna. Krishna first went to Aditi's house and returned her earrings. Aditi blessed Satyabhama and gave her the boon that Satyabhama would never grow old or ugly, she would be in a state of perpetual youth.

Aditi also told Indra to worship Krishna. But Indra's wife Shachi thought that Satyabhama was a mere human, so she did not give Satyabhama any parijata flowers, although she wore them herself.

Krishna and Satyabhama went for a stroll in the gardens and there they saw the parijata tree. The leaves of the tree were of copper colour and the bark was of gold. Satyabhama said, "Why don't you take this tree to Dvaraka?" And she persisted, "If you really love me, please take this tree to our house. I will wear the flowers on my hair."

Krishna laughed. He uprooted the tree and placed it on Garuda's back. The guards said, "Please don't take this tree. It belongs to Shachi, the wife of Indra." They also pointed out that the taking of the tree would arouse the wrath of the gods.

At this, Satyabhama grew angry. "Who is Indra and who is Shachi?", she said. "This tree came out of the churning of the ocean, so it belongs to everyone. Why should Indra alone enjoy it? My husband is taking away this tree, go and tell Shachi this. Let me see if her husband can prevent it from happening. Go and tell Shachi that a mere human is taking the tree away."

The guards went and told Shachi what was happening. Incited by Shachi, Indra attacked Krishna with all the soldiers that the gods could muster. Indra had his vajra for a weapon, the other devas had clubs, swords, maces and spears. On seeing Indra on Airavata, Krishna blew on his conch shell and let loose thousands and thousands of arrows. The gods flung many weapons at him, but Krishna repelled all these weapons. Garuda also helped in the fight. With a mace Krishna destroyed Yama's weapon. With his chakra he destroyed Kubera's palanquin. With a glance he robbed the sun of all energy. Agni was defeated with Krishna's arrows. The vasus, the rudras, the maruts and the gandharvas had to flee.

Indra and Krishna fought with each other while Garuda fought with Airavata. Indra finally took up his vajra and Krishna took up his chakra. Everyone in the worlds was frightened because the worlds might be annihilated. But when Indra hurled his vajra, Krishna simply caught the weapon in his hand. He did not fling the chakra. Indra started to run away.

Satyabhama taunted him. "Indra, king of the gods, why are you running away?", she said. "Aren't you Shachi's husband? Fleeing does not become you! Don't run away. Here, take the parijata tree. Let the minds of the gods be at rest."

Indra then apologised for all that had happened. He also said that there was no shame in losing to Krishna. For Krishna was, after all, nothing but Vishnu.

Krishna smiled and returned the parijata tree, as well as Indra's vajra. But Indra refused to take the tree back. He requested Krishna to take the tree to Dvaraka. Once Krishna died, the tree would return on its own to heaven. This Krishna agreed to do and the tree got the pride of place in Krishna's garden in Dvaraka. All the Yadavas came to see it.

Narakasura's elephants, horses and other wealth had also been brought to Dvaraka. The sixteen thousand and one hundred women that Narakasura had imprisoned had come to Dvaraka. Krishna married all of them.

Usha and Vanasura

Krishna had more than one lakh and eighty thousand sons. But the best of them was Pradyumna and Pradyumna's son was Aniruddha.

Vali's son was Vanasura and Vanasura's daughter was Usha. Usha once met Parvati and Shiva. She asked Parvati who her husband would be. Parvati replied that in the month of Vaishakha a person would appear in Usha's dreams. And this person would be her husband.

As promised by Parvati, Usha did see a person in her dreams. But she did not know how this person was. She told her friend Chitrlekha about this. Chitrlekha thought that the only way to find out was to show Usha the portraits of various important personages amongst the devas, gandharvas and asuras. But the required person could not be identified from these portraits. Usha was then shown the portraits of humans and immediately she identified Aniruddha."

Many years ago, Vanasura had prayed to Mahadeva," he had said, "please grant me fights. I have ten thousand arms. What will I do with all these arms if I don't get a chance to fight?"

"Be patient," replied Mahadeva. "One day you will find your flag lying broken. When that happens, you will get the opportunity to fight as much as you wish."

At this Vanasura was happy.

Meanwhile, once Aniruddha's identity had been established, Chitrlekha wondered what could be done. She went to Dvaraka and secretly brought Aniruddha to meet Usha. That was the very day on which Vanasura found his flag lying broken. The guards also came and informed him that Aniruddha was with Usha. Vanasura sent his soldiers to fight with Aniruddha, but Aniruddha killed them all with a club.

Then Vanasura himself entered the fray. Initially, he was beaten by Aniruddha. But he used maya to tie Aniruddha up.

Narada went to Dvaraka and told the Yadavas this. So Krishna, Balarama and Pradyumna came to rescue Aniruddha. Many were the soldiers that Krishna killed before entering the city. Also at the gate was a demon known as Jvara, a demon with a huge body, three arms and three legs. This demon had been born out of Mahadeva's body. The demon was so powerful that it even caused Balarama some discomfort. But Krishna created a demon from his own body which killed the demon Jvara.

Krishna killed many asura soldiers. Vanasura himself came out to fight. Mahadeva and Kartikeya fought on Vana's side and Vanasura's chariot was driven by Nandi. Terrible was the war between Krishna and Mahadeva and everyone thought that the world would come to an end. But Krishna tired out Mahadeva. Pradyumna defeated Kartikeya, and Balarama killed many of Vanasura's soldiers. Krishna and Vanasura shot arrows at each other. Then Krishna took up this sudharshana chakra and sliced off all Vanasura's

arms. But when he was about to kill Vanasura, Mahadeva intervened and begged for Vana's life. This boon Krishna granted.

At the end of the war, Aniruddha and Usha too returned to Dvaraka with the other Yadavas.

The Slaying of Pundraka

There was a king named Pundraka who suffered from the illusion that he was Krishna, the incarnation of Vishnu on earth. He adopted the name of Vasudeva and sent a messenger to Krishna saying, "Stop pretending that you are Vishnu. It is I who am Vasudeva. Come to me and beg for your life."

Pundraka was a friend of the king of Kashi. Krishna told the messenger that he would leave for Kashi the very next day.

Hearing the message, Pundraka got ready with his army. Krishna arrived in Kashi on Garuda. Krishna killed the enemy soldiers with his arrows, mace and chakra. He sliced Pundraka's body with his chakra and eventually killed him with a mace. He also killed Pundraka's friend, the king of Kashi. He cut off the king's head with his arrows and flung it into the city of Kashi. After that, Krishna returned to Dvaraka.

When the head of the king of Kashi fell inside the city, the inhabitants were surprised at this strange phenomenon. But the king's son found out that Krishna was responsible for this and prayed to Mahadeva. When as a result of the yajna Mahadeva appeared before him, the son begged, "Please create a demon that will kill Krishna, my father's murderer."

Mahadeva agreed and created such a demon from the fire of the yajna. This demon arrived in Dvaraka wishing to kill Krishna. Flames issued out of its mouth and its hair was also like fire. Krishna flung his sudarshana chakra at the demon. The demon turned and ran, but wherever the demon went, the chakra followed. Finally, the demon arrived in Kashi. But the chakra followed it there and burnt up the entire city. All the kings, servants, horses, elephants and cattle there were burnt.

Having achieved its purpose, the chakra returned to Krishna.

Shamba's Wedding

Krishna's son Shamba wanted to marry Duryodhana's daughter. He kidnapped her. But Karna, Duryodhana, Bhishma, Drona and other warriors fought with Shamba and managed to imprison him. On learning the news, the Yadavas got ready to fight with the Kauravas.

But Balarama restrained the Yadavas. "Leave it to me," he said. "Let me go alone. The Kauravas will listen to me and will let Shamba go." Balarama went to Hastinapura but did not enter the city. Duryodhana and the others learnt of this and came to pay their respects. Balarama then told them that King Ugrasena had requested that Shamba might be released.

But this request made the Kauravas angry. "Balarama, what are you saying?" they asked. "How dare the Yadavas order the Kauravas?" This is a bit like a servant ordering a master.

Refusing to release Shamba, the Kauravas returned to Hastinapura. This angered Balarama. He grasped the foundations of Hastinapura city with his plough and prepared to hurl the city into the Bhagirathi river. This brought the Kauravas to their senses and they begged for forgiveness.

Shamba and his wife were brought to Balarama and he forgave the

Kauravas. Ever since that day, Hastinapura leans towards the river on one side.

The Death of Dvidida

The asura known as Naraka was opposed to the devas. And Naraka had a monkey friend named Dvidida. Dvidida fought with the devas and became particularly belligerent after Naraka was killed by Krishna. He destroyed all the yajnas and persecuted the sages. He also destroyed cities, villages and forests. He even tore up mountains and flung them into the ocean. The ocean overflowed and flooded cities and villages.

One day, Balarama was busy drinking in a garden. Dvidida arrived there and began to make a general nuisance of himself. He picked up Balarama's plough and club. And despite Balarama's warning him, he continued to laugh at him. Greatly angered, Balarama picked up his club and the monkey also picked up a huge boulder. Balarama broke up the monkey's boulder with his club. The monkey then began to hit Balarama on the chest. But Balarama brought down his fists on the monkey's head and the monkey died.

The End of the Yadavas

There was a place of pilgrimage known as Pindaraka. Some Yadava youths once met the sages Kanva, Vishvamitra and Narada there. The Yadava youths dressed Shamba up as a woman and brought him to the sages. "Sages," they asked, "tell us whether this woman will have a son or a daughter."

The sages saw through the game and were angered at the insult. "This person will give birth to a club," they said. "And that club will destroy your clan."

In due course a club came out of Shamba's body. But learning of the curse, King Ugrasena pulverised the club and had the dust scattered in the ocean. But the dust got changed into sharp reeds that grew on the shores of the ocean.

A small part of the club could not be crushed. This was thrown into the ocean as it was, and a fish swallowed this piece. When the fish was caught, this piece of the club came out of the fish's stomach and a hunter named Jara acquired the piece.

There was a place of pilgrimage known as Prabhasa and eventually the Yadavas went there. Only one Yadava named Uddhava went off to do tapasya on Mount Gandhamadana. In Prabhasa, the Yadavas began to drink and soon lost all control of their senses. They started to fight and picked up the reeds that were growing on the shores as weapons. Krishna did try to restrain them, but the Yadavas were in no mood to listen. Soon, Krishna and Daruka were the only Yadavas who were left alive.

Krishna and Daruka were wandering around and found Balarama seated under the tree. A huge snake came out of Balarama's mouth and disappeared into the sea. This meant that Balarama died.

Krishna told Daruka, "Go and tell King Ugrasena all this. Soon I too will die. And soon the sea will swallow up the city of Dvaraka. Go and tell the Yadavas who are left in Dvaraka that they should wait for Arjuna's arrival and that they should leave the city with Arjuna. And go and tell Arjuna to protect my people as best as he can. Vajra is to be made the king the Yadavas."

Daruka paid his respects to Krishna and left.

Krishna sat down to meditate. The hunter named Jara arrived there. He had fashioned an arrow-head out of the piece of the club. Seeing Krishna's feet, he thought that it was part of a deer and let loose an arrow. When he came up to see what happened, he found that his arrow had pierced the body of a man. He begged for forgiveness and Krishna assured him that Jara would go to heaven. In fact, a chariot immediately arrive to take Jara to heaven.

Krishna died. He was a hundred years old.

Arjuna found the dead bodies of Krishna, Balarama and other important Yadavas and performed their shraddha ceremonies. Krishna's eight major wives died on Krishna's funeral pyre. Revati did the same on Balarama's . Ugrasena, Rohini, Devaki and Vasudeva also entered a fire. The others left Dvaraka with Arjuna.

As soon as Krishna died, the parijata tree and the assembly hall named Sudharma returned to heaven. The kali era began. And the city of Dvaraka was swallowed up by the sea, with the exception of Krishna's own dwelling.

Arjuna settled some of the Yadavas in the Punjab. But when he was taking the Yadava women with him, the party was set upon by a band of dacoits. Arjuna tried to repel the dacoits but found that he had lost all his powers. His strength had left him with Krishna's death.

This is the end of the fifth section of the Vishnu Purana.

The Kali Era

Maitreya wanted to know more about the kali era.

In the kali era, the norms of varna and ashrama will not be followed as is laid down in the Vedas. No one will pray to the gods. Relations between guru and shishya will cease. Might will be right. Women will all the time take care of their hair. Wealth will mean everything. Instead of spending money on dharma, people will spend money on building houses. Money will be spent for oneself and not for guests. Men will be selfish. Money will be earned through evil means. There will be drought.

Men will not bathe before their meals. Both men and women will become shorter. Women will not obey their husbands. The kings will not take care of the subjects, but will only impose taxes. People will become old when they reach the age of twelve and no one will live for more than twenty years. Evil will flourish. No one will worship Vishnu. All the classes will become like shudras.

There is only one good thing about kali yuga. In satya yuga one had to do a lot of tapasya to earn some punya. In kali yuga the same punya can be acquired through a little tapasya. The equivalence is like this. Ten years of tapasya in satya yuga are equal to one year of tapasya in treta yuga, one month of tapasya in dvapara yuga and one day of tapasya in kali yuga.

Vyasadeva said that shudras and women are fortunate. The other varnas have to do many things to enter that dharma is being followed. But for the shudras the path of dharma is simple. They only have to serve the other varnas to acquire punya. Similarly men have to do many things to achieve punya. For women, the attainment of punya is easy; they only have to serve their husbands.

Destruction

There are three types of pralaya or destruction, the first being brahma or naimittika. Naimittika pralaya takes place after a kalpa, that is after one of Brahma's days and after fourteen Manus have passed. Before this pralaya, the earth becomes weak and there are no rains for a hundred years. Vishnu adopts the form of Rudra and drinks up all the water that there is in the rivers, the oceans, the seas and the mountains. The seven rays of the sun manifest themselves as seven different suns. These suns burn up the

three worlds. Not only is bhuloka burnt up, but bhavarloka and svarloka are also destroyed. There are dark and thick clouds everywhere. For a hundred years it continues to rain. All is darkness. For a hundred years the winds blow. And Vishnu sleeps on the waters that are everywhere till the worlds are created again.

The second type of destruction is known as prakrita pralaya. The three basic gunas are, as you know, sattva, rajas and tamas. Their perfect balance is known as prakriti. At the time of destruction when prakriti becomes assimilated into the paramatman, that is known as prakrita pralaya. The third type of pralaya is known as atyantika pralaya. This refers to the disappearance of three types of distress, adhyatmika, adhidaivika and adhibhoutika. Adhyatmika distress consists of physical and mental ailments like fever and sadness. Adhidaivika distress is that due to the elements, such as coldness and heat. Adhibhoutika distress is that which humans face from other living beings, such as ghosts and snakes. At the time of atyantika destruction, these distresses also disappear.

Keshidhvaja and Khandikya

Many years ago there was a king named Dharmadhvaja. He had two sons, Mitadhvaja and Kritadhvaja. Kritadhvaja was interested in acquiring knowledge and his son Keshidhvaja also became interested in acquiring spiritual knowledge. Mitadhvaja's son Khandikya was a king, interested in karma yoga, that is, union with God through action.

Both Khandikya and Keshidhvaja tried to outdo each other. Khandikya eventually lost his kingdom to Keshidhvaja and went off to the forest with his priests and ministers. Although he became a king, Keshidhvaja used to perform yajnas. Once the cow intended for the yajna was eaten up by a tiger. This was a sin and Keshidhvaja had to atone for it. He asked several sages what the form of penance (prayashchitta) should be, but none of the sages knew. They all said that the right person to ask was Khandikya, who was now living in the forest.

Keshidhvaja dressed himself up in deerskin and went to meet Khandikya. Thinking that Keshidhvaja might have come to kill him, Khandikya took up his bow and arrow. But Keshidhvaja told him that he had merely come to ask Khandikya a question. Khandikya told him what the right penance was and Keshidhvaja successfully completed the yajna.

But he then realized that he had not given Khandikya the dakshina or fee that was due to a guru. As dakshina, Khandikya desired that Keshidhvaja instruct him on the path to spiritual knowledge.

Keshidhvaja told Khandikya about the true nature of the atman, which was different from the mere physical body. True knowledge was that which taught that the atman was

part of the paramatman and that one should therefore not get attached to material possessions. This realization came about through the practise or yoga.

How The Puranas Came Down to us

At the end, the Vishnu Purana narrates how the Puranas came to be handed down to us through generations of disciples.

The Puranas tell men of the ways to attain moksha (salvation). Ages ago, Brahma himself had told the sage Ribhu the story of the Puranas. From Ribhu the knowledge had passed to Priyavrata and from Priyavrata to Bhaguri. Bhaguri gave the knowledge to Stavamitra and Stavamitra to Dadhichi. From Dadhichi it passed to Sarasvata, from Sarasvata to "Bhrigu, from Bhrigu to Purukutsa, from Purukutsa to Narmada, from Narmada to Dhritarashtra and Purana. Dhritarsashtra and Purana gave the knowledge to Vasuki, Vasuki to Vatsa and Vatsa to Ashvatara. Ashvatara passed it on to Kambala and Kambala to Elapatra.

The sage Vedashira acquired the knowledge of the Puranas from the underworld and gave it to Pramati, Pramati gave it to Jatukarna and Jatukarna passed it on to many sages.

Parashara had learnt of the Puranas from Vashishtha and he had now passed on the knowledge to Maitreya. Maitreya would eventually teach it to Shamika.

So ends the sixth and final section of the Vishu Purana.