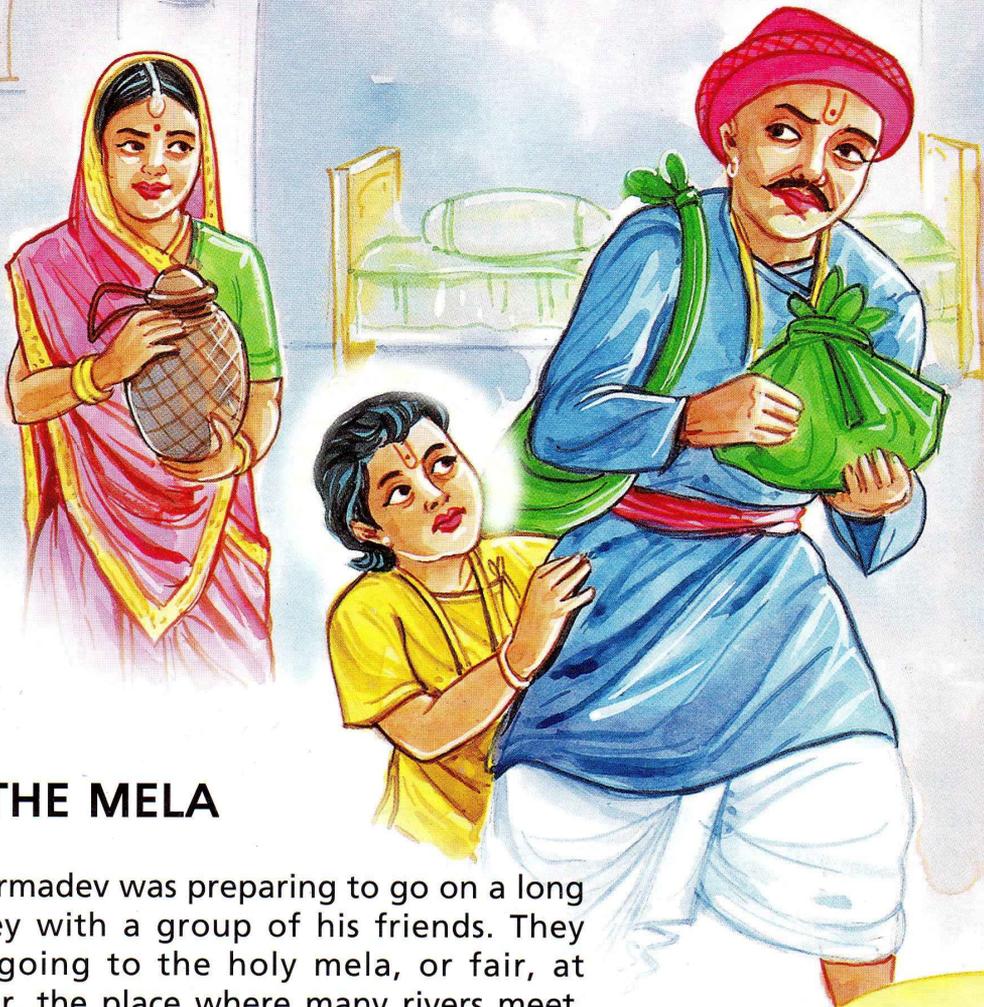


|| Shree Swaminarayano Vijaytetram ||

**SHREE
GHANASHYAM
BAL CHARITRA**

PART - 5

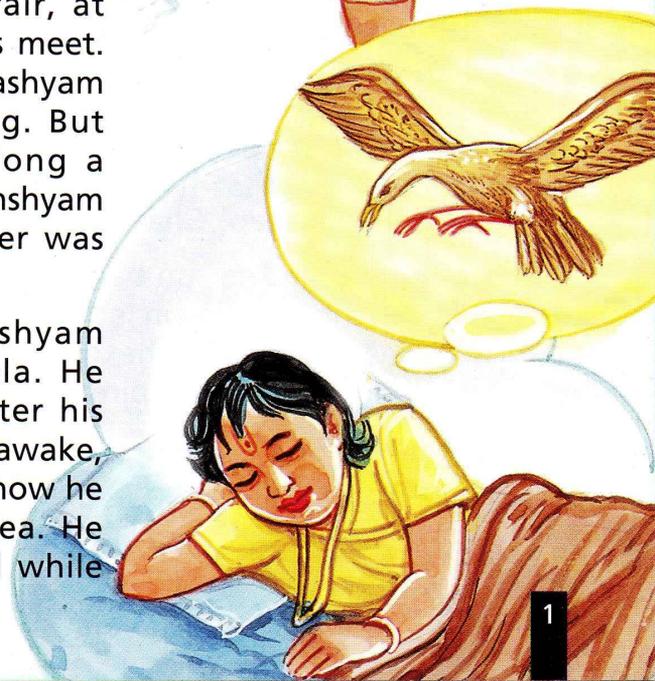




AT THE MELA

Dharmadev was preparing to go on a long journey with a group of his friends. They were going to the holy mela, or fair, at Harihar, the place where many rivers meet. As he was packing his things, Ghanashyam asked his father to take him along. But Dharmadev refused. It was too long a journey for a small boy to make. Ghanashyam pleaded and pestered, but his father was adamant.

After his father left, Ghanashyam continued to think about the mela. He longed to go there. That night, after his mother had put him to bed, he lay awake, thinking about the mela, wondering how he could get there. Then he got an idea. He created two bodies for himself, and while





one remained in the bed, the other got up, went outside, and with the power of his mind, he called on the holy giant eagle, Garuda. The majestic bird immediately flew down to the house, and bowed his head before the little boy.

Ghanashyam clambered onto the back of the huge bird, and ordered him to take him to the mela at Harihar. Running and flapping his wings, the bird took off and climbed higher and higher into the skies, with Ghanashyam clinging to its feathers. The wind was gently blowing through the boy's head, and as he looked down he could see the whole earth laid out below like a map. Ghanashyam laughed with joy.

After some time the sun began to rise, and they could see Harihar below them. The giant Garuda circled, and began to descend. Then using his huge wings like a parachute, he gently landed near the town. Ghanashyam clambered down from the bird and set off in search of his father.

Dharmadev and his friends were down at the place where the rivers meet,

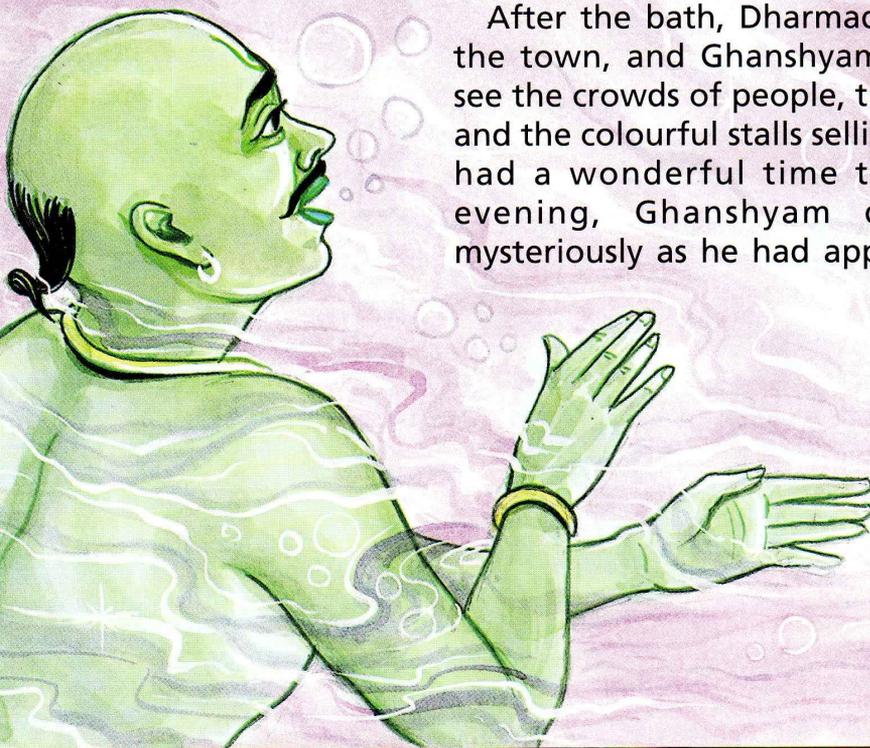


getting ready to take their bath. Suddenly he heard a small familiar voice call out "Father!" Looking up in surprise, he saw Ghanashyam running toward him. "My son!" he exclaimed. "How did you get here?"

Then Ghanashyam explained about Garuda. At first his father didn't want to believe him, but then he remembered the words of Muni Markandaya at Ghanashyam's naming ceremony. He had told him that his son was God himself. Then he realised it must be true what his son had told him. He hugged his little boy tightly, and told him to get ready for the holy bath in the river.

Ghanashyam was the first to enter the water, followed by his father. Raising his hands above his head, Dharmadev dipped down under the water. As he did so, he could see his son also under the water. But it was his son no more. It was God himself, with four arms outstretched, smiling at him! Coming back to the surface, he looked at Ghanashyam. He was the same little boy as before.

After the bath, Dharmadev took his son around the town, and Ghanashyam was filled with joy to see the crowds of people, the horses and elephants, and the colourful stalls selling delicious snacks. They had a wonderful time together. Then, in the evening, Ghanashyam disappeared, just as mysteriously as he had appeared.



Back at home, life was going on as before, and Bhaktimata was waiting with Ghanashyam for the return of her husband. After several days, he returned. Excitedly, Ghanashyam greeted him. Bhaktimata asked him "And what have you brought from Harihar for our son?" Dharmadev laughed. "Why should I bring him anything?" he asked. "He was there with me at the mela!"

Bhaktimata raised her eyebrows in surprise. "How can that be?" she asked. "He was here with me all the time!" Ghanashyam and his father looked at each other, and laughed. Then sitting Bhaktimata on the verandah, they told her the whole story.

STUDY:

1. What was the name of the place where the mela took place?
2. How did Ghanashyam get to the mela?
3. What was the name of the giant eagle?
4. What happened when Dharmadev took his holy bath?

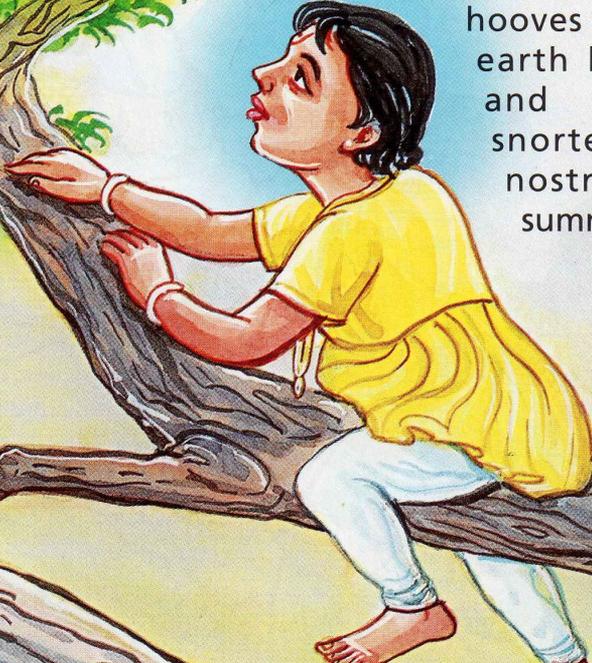




GHANASHYAM AND THE DIVINE HORSE

The Narayan lake was a favourite playground for Ghanashyam and his friends. One day they were all there, playing games and climbing the mango trees near the lake. Sitting astride the branches, the boys were pretending to ride horses, jogging up and down, and making clicking sounds with their tongues, and slapping the branches with twigs.

"My horse can go faster than yours!" shouted Veniram. Prag said, "No. Mine is the fastest! See. I'm leaving Ghanashyam behind!"



Unable to resist the challenge, Ghanashyam summoned up his divine powers. Suddenly the branch on which he sat became a real, living horse. But this was no ordinary horse. It had seven heads, and the power of twenty horses. Its hooves pounded the earth like thunder, and hot breath snorted from its nostrils like the summer wind.

Sitting astride the magnificent beast, Ghanashyam dug his heels into its sides, and the divine horse took off like a rocket, churning up clouds of dusts with its hooves.

As it raced around the lake, a group of women were coming down to the water's edge to collect water, their brass pots balanced perfectly on their heads. As they saw the horse and Ghanashyam approaching, they shrieked in fright, and ran for cover, their pots tumbling and clattering in all directions.

Some brahmins bathing in the lake looked up from their rituals, and raised their hands in praise at the divine sight.

Round and round the lake sped Ghanashyam on the seven-headed horse, and then he flew like the wind, on to the Ramsagar lake. There also they frightened the women collecting water. Then on they sped to Bihari well, where the women dropped their water pots inside the well and ran helter-skelter. Then on to the Khapa talavadi, and



on and on to the villages of Surval, Tinva, Asnara and Bhoi, and on again to the village of Navadi, where they stopped briefly to take water from the well of the King Sunmansingh. Then on to Chappaiya, and finally back to the Narayan lake!

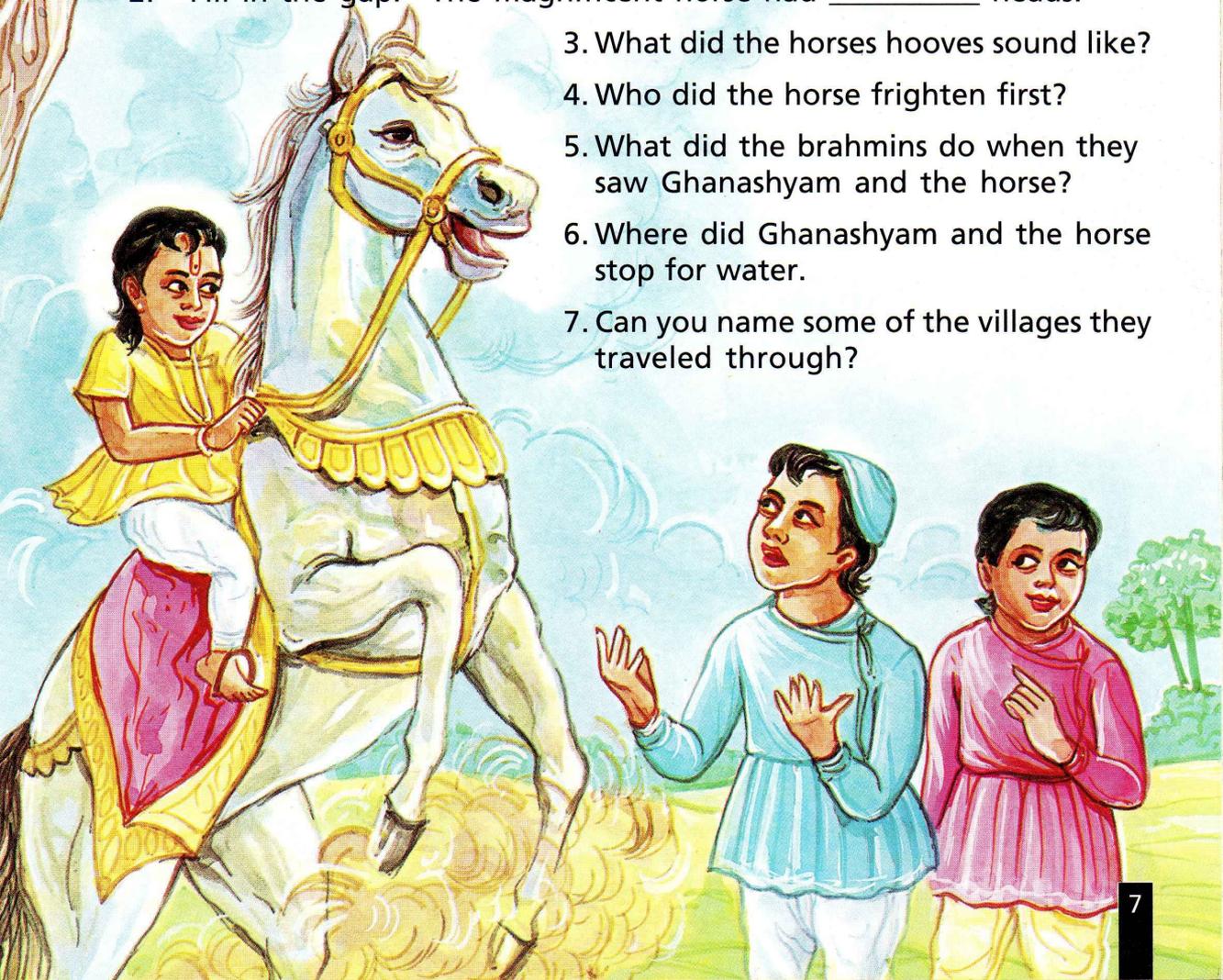
Ghanashyam pulled up the snorting beast in front of his friends. They cheered him wildly, as the magnificent horse pawed the ground with its powerful hooves. Then with a wave from Ghanashyam's hand, the beast disappeared, and Ghanashyam was sitting on the branch, as before.

"Now, tell me." said Ghanashyam. "Who has the fastest horse?"

"Ghanashyam!" the boys said in chorus. "Ghanashyam! Ghanashyam! Ghanashyam!"

STUDY:

1. Name two of Ghanashyam's friends who were with him at the lake.
2. Fill in the gap. "The magnificent horse had _____ heads."
3. What did the horses hooves sound like?
4. Who did the horse frighten first?
5. What did the brahmins do when they saw Ghanashyam and the horse?
6. Where did Ghanashyam and the horse stop for water.
7. Can you name some of the villages they traveled through?

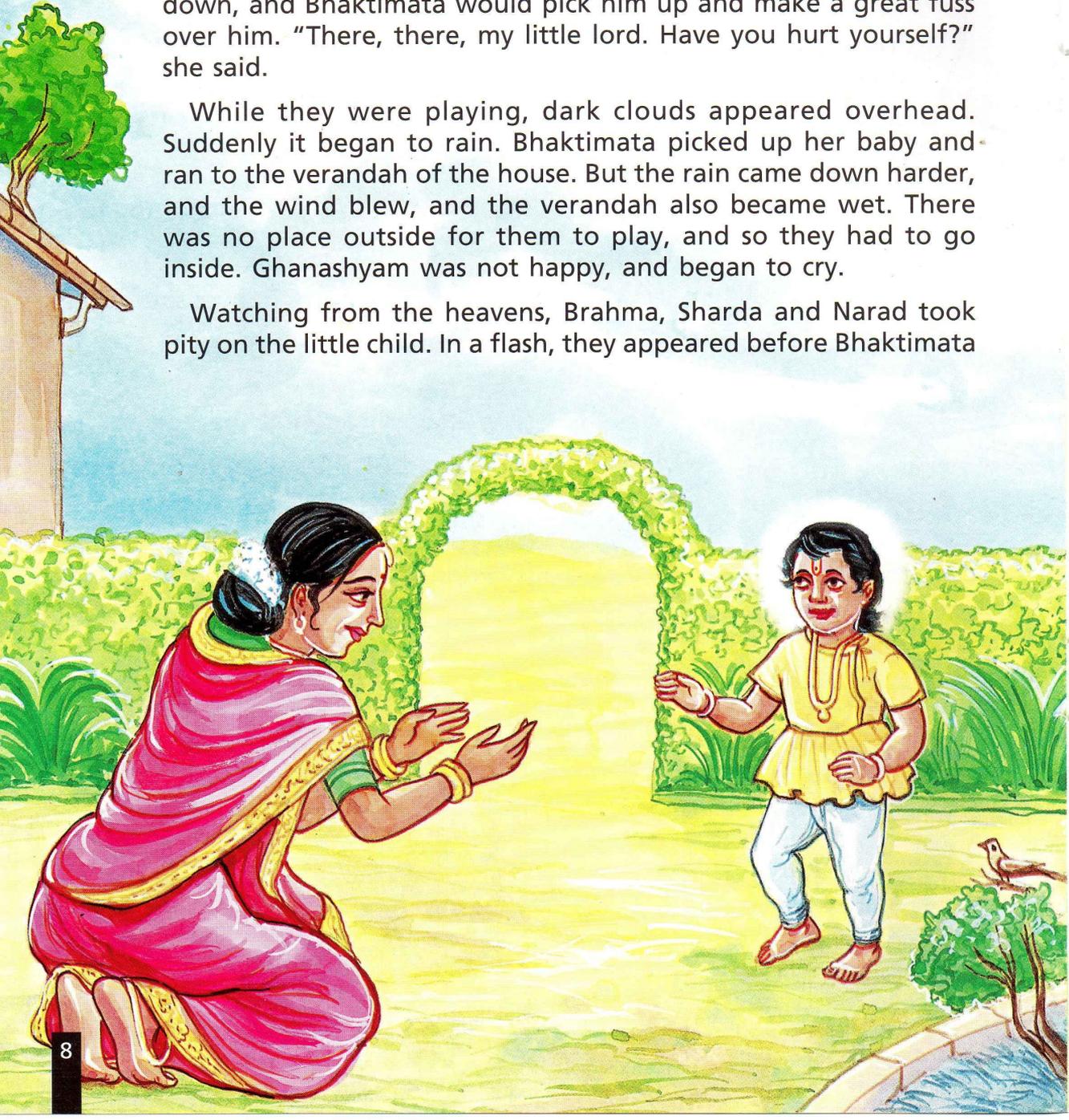


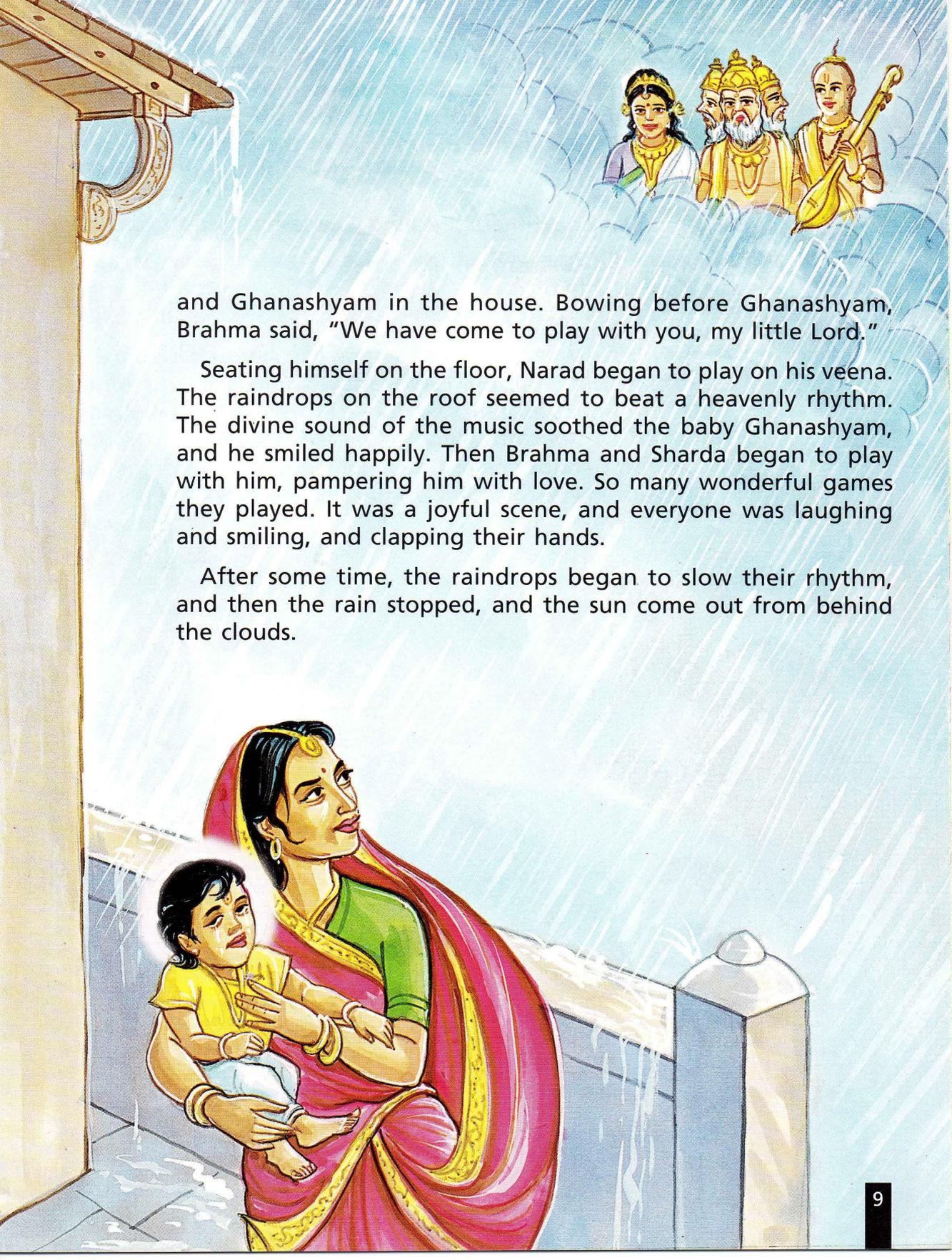
THE RAINY DAY

yam loved to play outside the house. One day, Bhaktimata and Ghanashyam were playing in the garden of the house. Bhaktimata was teaching him to stand. Holding his little hands, she would raise him to his feet. Then she would clap her hands, while he struggled to balance. Sometimes the little Ghanashyam would fall down, and Bhaktimata would pick him up and make a great fuss over him. "There, there, my little lord. Have you hurt yourself?" she said.

While they were playing, dark clouds appeared overhead. Suddenly it began to rain. Bhaktimata picked up her baby and ran to the verandah of the house. But the rain came down harder, and the wind blew, and the verandah also became wet. There was no place outside for them to play, and so they had to go inside. Ghanashyam was not happy, and began to cry.

Watching from the heavens, Brahma, Sharda and Narad took pity on the little child. In a flash, they appeared before Bhaktimata





and Ghanashyam in the house. Bowing before Ghanashyam, Brahma said, "We have come to play with you, my little Lord."

Seating himself on the floor, Narad began to play on his veena. The raindrops on the roof seemed to beat a heavenly rhythm. The divine sound of the music soothed the baby Ghanashyam, and he smiled happily. Then Brahma and Sharda began to play with him, pampering him with love. So many wonderful games they played. It was a joyful scene, and everyone was laughing and smiling, and clapping their hands.

After some time, the raindrops began to slow their rhythm, and then the rain stopped, and the sun came out from behind the clouds.

Narad stood up. "There, my Lord, now you can go outside again and play with your mother." he said. And so saying, the three divine beings bowed before the baby Ghanshyam, and disappeared, returning to their home in the skies.

STUDY:

1. What was Bhaktimata teaching Ghanshyam in the garden?
2. Where did Ghanshyam like to play?
3. What were the names of the three gods who came to play with Ghanshyam?
4. What musical instrument was Narad playing?

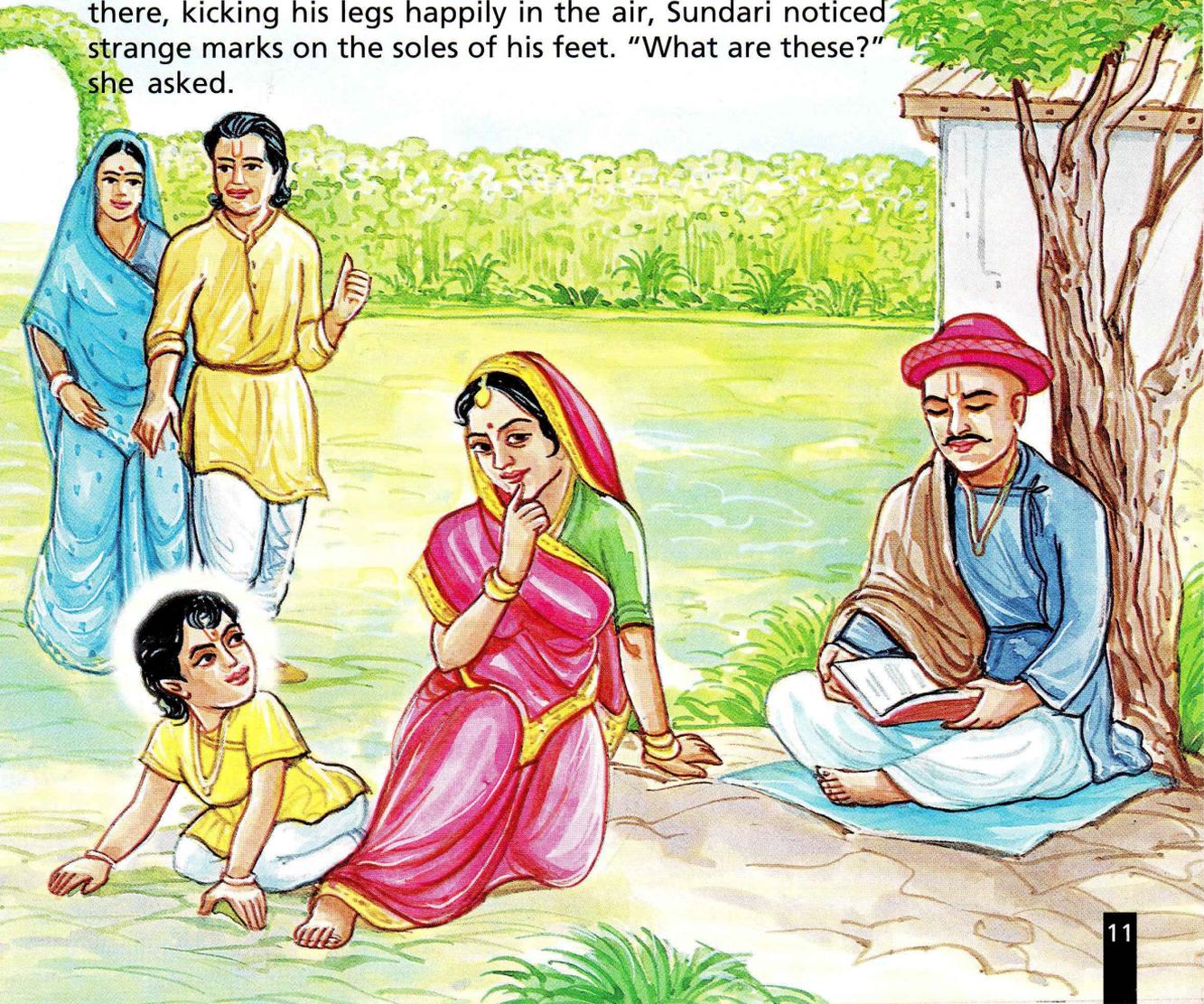


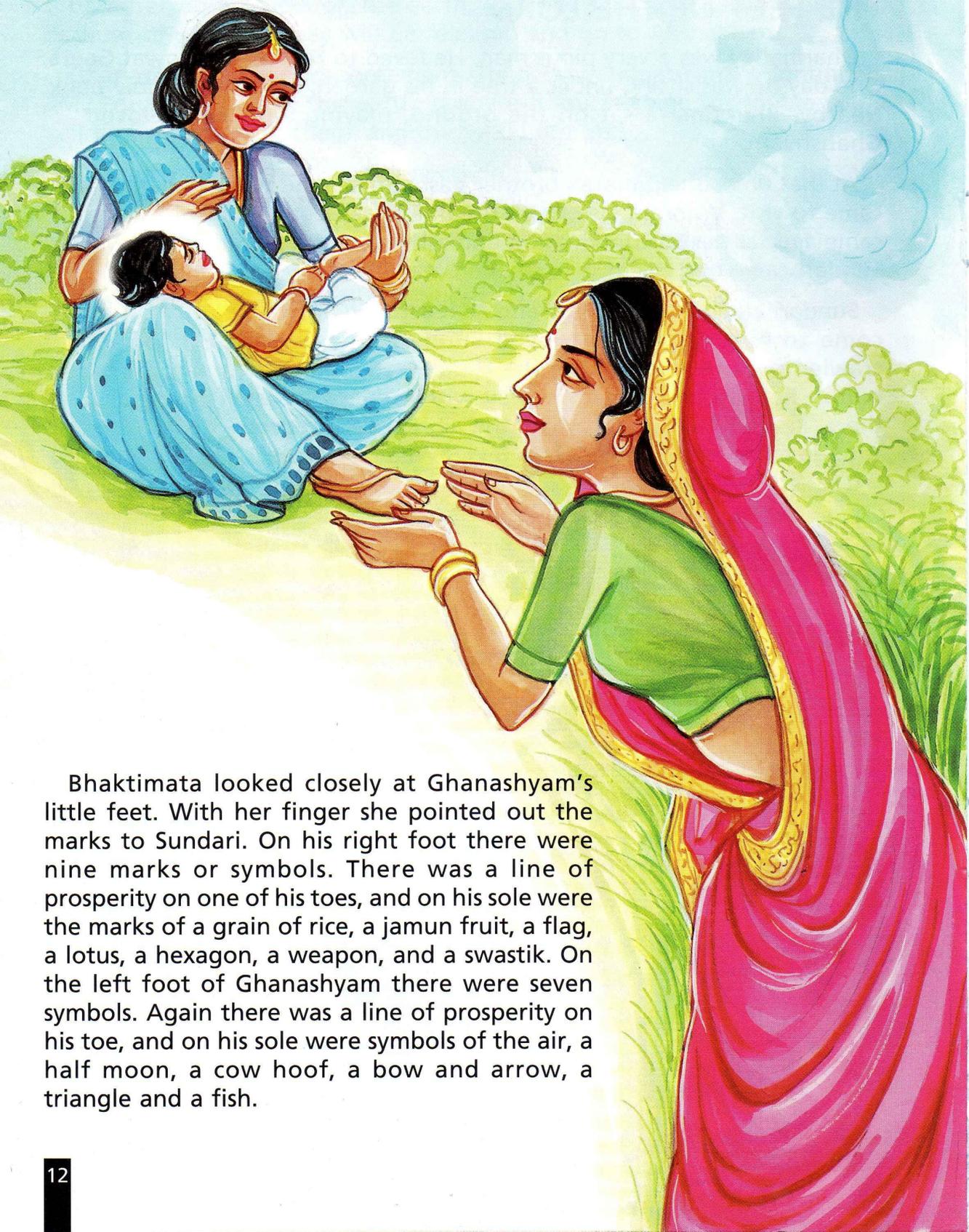
THE FEET OF THE LORD

Dharmadev was a very pious man. He loved to read the Bhagwat Geeta. One day he was sitting under a tree in his garden, reading the holy book. Nearby, Bhaktimata sat on the ground, playing with her beloved Ghanshyam.

At that time, Bhaktimata's brother Vashram, and his wife Sundari, came to visit. Vashram also loved the Bhagwat Geeta, and so he came and sat next to Dharmadev, and asked him to read aloud. Sundari came and sat next to Bhaktimata.

Sundari clapped her hands and called to Ghanshyam to come to her. Ghanshyam loved Sundari, and happily crawled over to her. Picking the child up, Sundari laid him in her lap and began to play with him. As he lay there, kicking his legs happily in the air, Sundari noticed strange marks on the soles of his feet. "What are these?" she asked.





Bhaktimata looked closely at Ghanashyam's little feet. With her finger she pointed out the marks to Sundari. On his right foot there were nine marks or symbols. There was a line of prosperity on one of his toes, and on his sole were the marks of a grain of rice, a jamun fruit, a flag, a lotus, a hexagon, a weapon, and a swastik. On the left foot of Ghanashyam there were seven symbols. Again there was a line of prosperity on his toe, and on his sole were symbols of the air, a half moon, a cow hoof, a bow and arrow, a triangle and a fish.

While the two women were marveling at the signs, suddenly a light began to emerge from Ghanshyam's feet. It grew so bright that Dharmadev stopped reading and looked up from the Bhagwat Geeta. The light seemed to spread over the whole earth.



Then in the middle of the light a wonderful vision appeared. There was Lord Laxminarayan, sitting on a throne, with many other gods around him! Stepping forward, Laxminarayan greeted Dharmadev and Vashram, Bhaktimata and Sundari. Then he stretched out his arms and lifted up the little Ghanshyam, and placed him on his throne.

Turning to Dharmadev, he said, "Blessed are you, for Lord Purshottam has chosen to take birth as your son, and to come to earth in your house, for the benefit of all mankind." Then kneeling before the little Lord, Laxminarayan worshipped him. "Oh Lord, your thoughts are our thoughts.



Your wishes are our wishes. You are the only path to truth."

Saying this, Laxminarayan picked up the little Lord Ghanashyam, and placed him back in the lap of Sundari. Then the vision disappeared, and the light was gone.

STUDY:

1. What was the holy book that Dharmadev was reading?
2. Fill in the blanks. "Ghanashyam had the marks of _____ symbols on his right foot, and _____ symbols on his left foot.
3. How many of the symbols can you name?
4. Who appeared in the middle of the bright light?

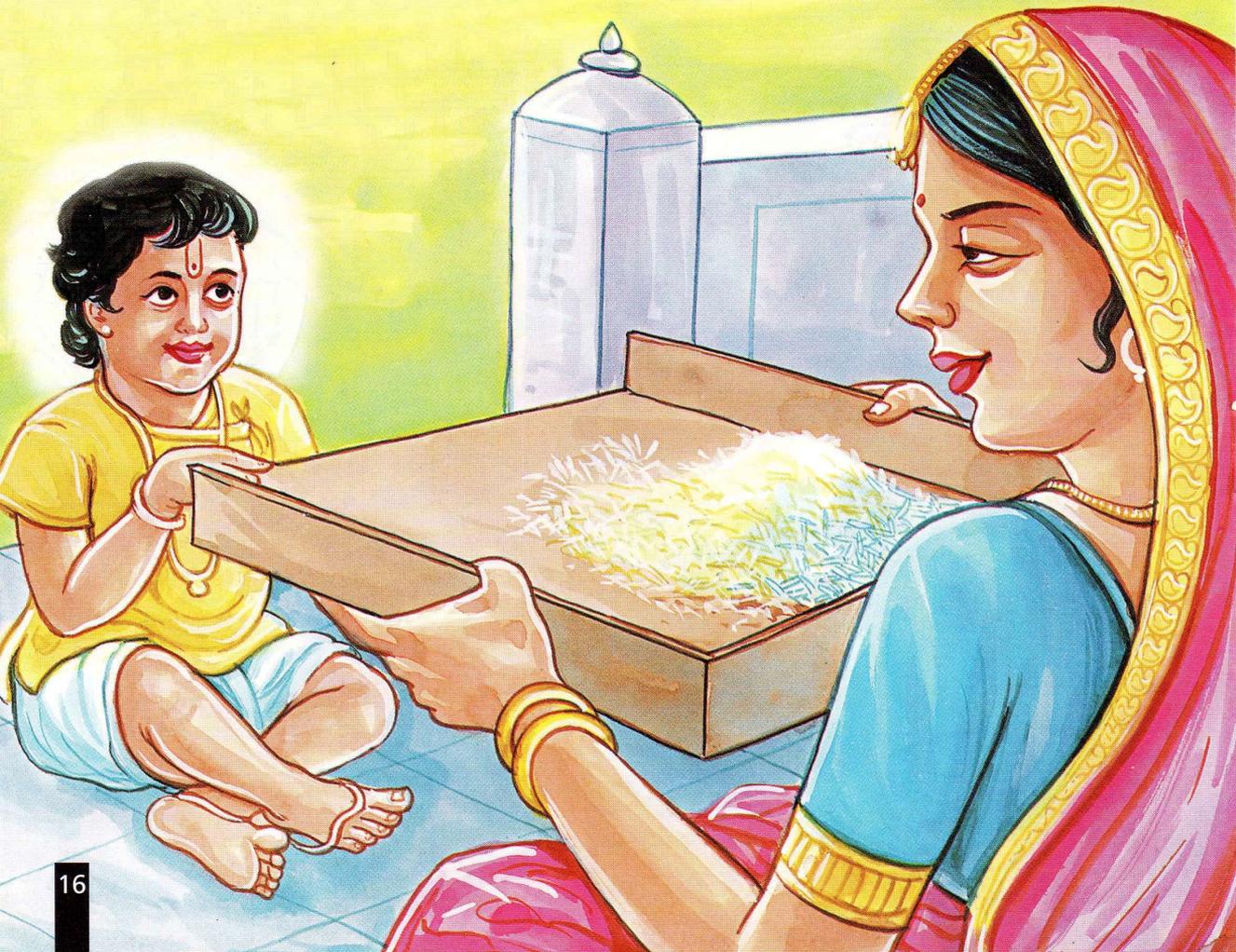


GHANASHYAM IS HUNGRY

A mother's work is never done. Looking after children and doing all the housework is not easy. One day, Bnhaktimata was breast-feeding her little Ghanashyam. It was getting late and she also had to cook the lunch. When she thought that Ghanashyam had had enough to drink, she put him down on the floor to play, and went back to her cooking.

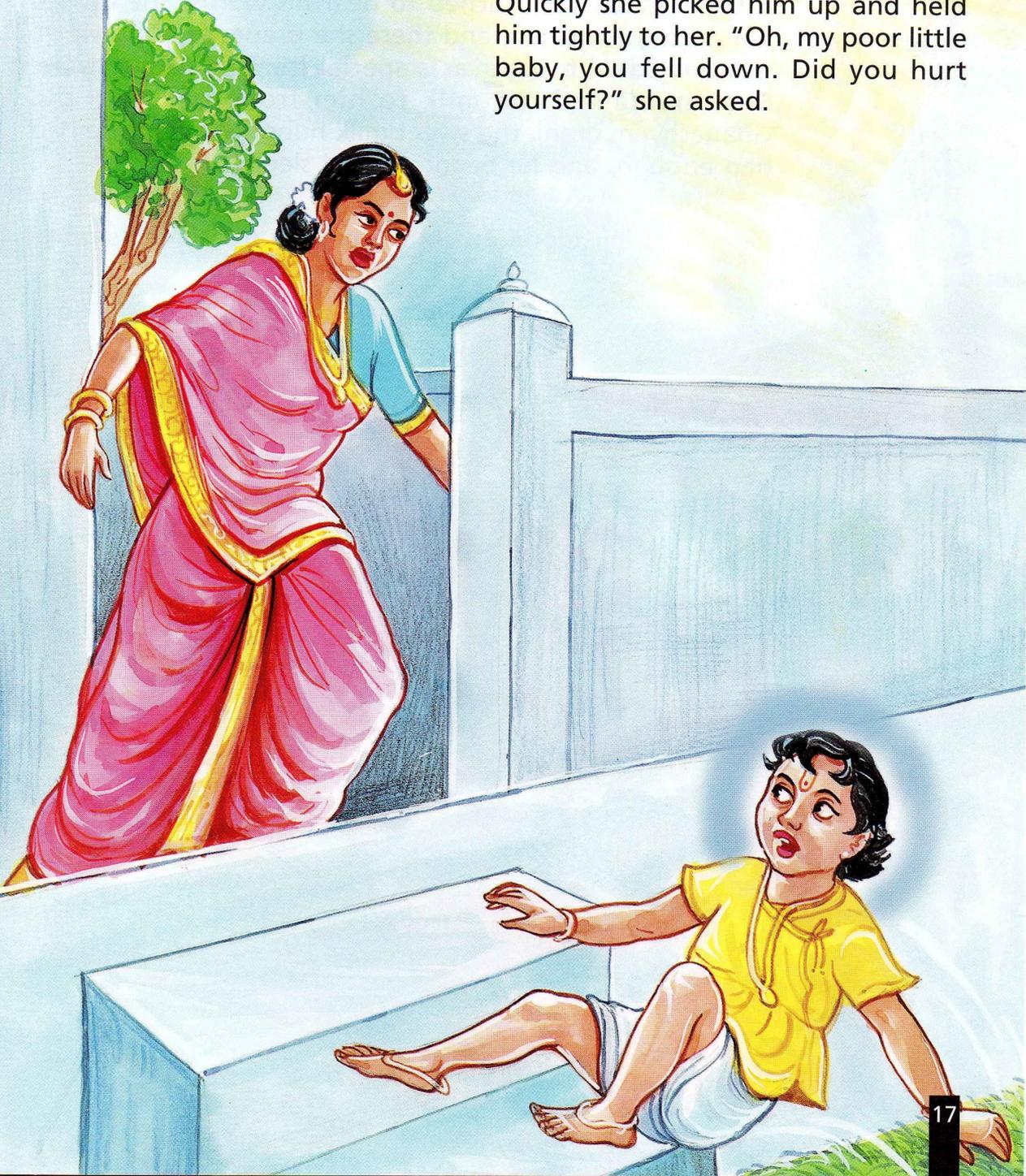
Taking out the supada, the winnowing basket, she measured the rice into it, and carefully began to search out the pieces of dust from it.

But Ghanashyam was still hungry, and wanted to get his mother's attention. He crawled to the front door, and out onto the verandah. At



the edge of the verandah he stood up... and then he tumbled down the steps! Immediately he began to cry and call out for his mother.

Bhaktimata heard his cries and came running from the kitchen. Quickly she picked him up and held him tightly to her. "Oh, my poor little baby, you fell down. Did you hurt yourself?" she asked.



Ghanashyam looked up into his mother's eyes, and spoke to her with his mind. "No, mother, I am not hurt. But I am still hungry. That is why I pretended to fall down. Don't you know that I am Purshottam, and I am here on this earth for the benefit of all Mankind. I would never fall down unless I wanted to."

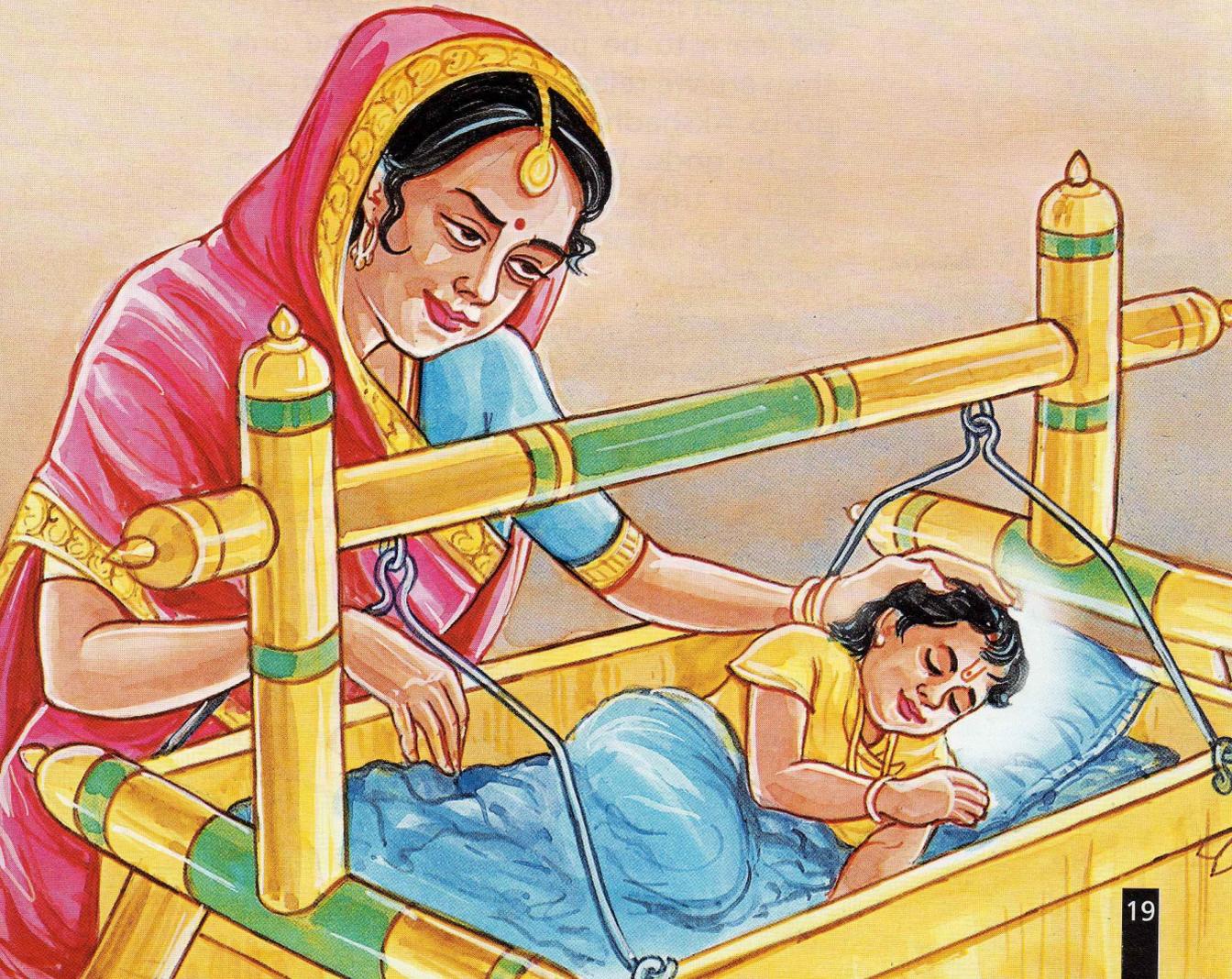
Bhaktimata was touched to hear his words. She carried him into the kitchen, and there she prepared some warm milk mixed with sugar as a special treat for Ghanashyam. Bhaktimata fed the milk to him from a saucer, and Ghanashyam drank the sweet milk hungrily. Finally he had had enough, and he began to feel sleepy.

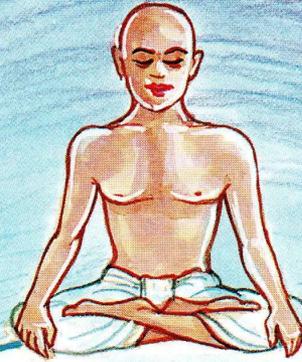


Bhaktimata laid him in his cradle and rocked it gently. Soon the little child closed his eyes and fell asleep. At last Bhaktimata was able to go back to her cooking.

STUDY:

1. What did Bhaktimata put the rice in? Can you draw one?
2. Finish the sentence, "A mother's work is _____."
3. What did Ghanashyam do to get his mother's attention?
4. What did Bhaktimata prepare for Ghanashyam as a special treat?





THE LORD OF ALL THINGS

Do you know that we are all born on this earth many times? After many births we learn to be pure in heart, and only then are we released from this earth and go to Akshadham, the heavenly abode of the gods. When we are ready, then at that time lord Satwagunabhimani comes to release our soul and send it to heaven.

When Ghanashyam was a little baby lord Satwagunabhimani came to visit him. He was very youthful in appearance, and stood before the little baby dressed all in pure white robes. He had strings of pure white pearls in his hair, and around his neck and wrists, and on his head was a magnificent crown.

He bowed before the little lord Ghanashyam, and spoke. "Oh my great

Lord, I am here to do your bidding. Whatever you want, I will do it for you."

The little baby Ghanashyam smiled up at him playfully, and his mind answered lord Satwagunabhimani. "So many times I have taken birth on this earth, but never once have you released my soul and sent it to Akshadham. Why is this so?"

Satwagunabhimani realised that Ghanashyam was only teasing him, but still he answered. " My Lord, you are the God of all things. I am here only because of you. Whatever I am it is because of you. Whatever powers I have it is because of you. I can only do whatever you want me to do... no more. It is you who have chosen to come again and again to earth. And



because you are now on the earth, so many souls will become purified because of you, and they will be released and go to Akshadham."

Ghanashyam smiled in agreement. Then Satwagunabhimani continued. "My Lord, fear not on this earth. If any evil asuras come to trouble you, I will fire my arrows at them, and they will burn up."

Ghanashyam laughed. "What need do I have for your arrows?" he said, "With just my thoughts I can burn up evil."

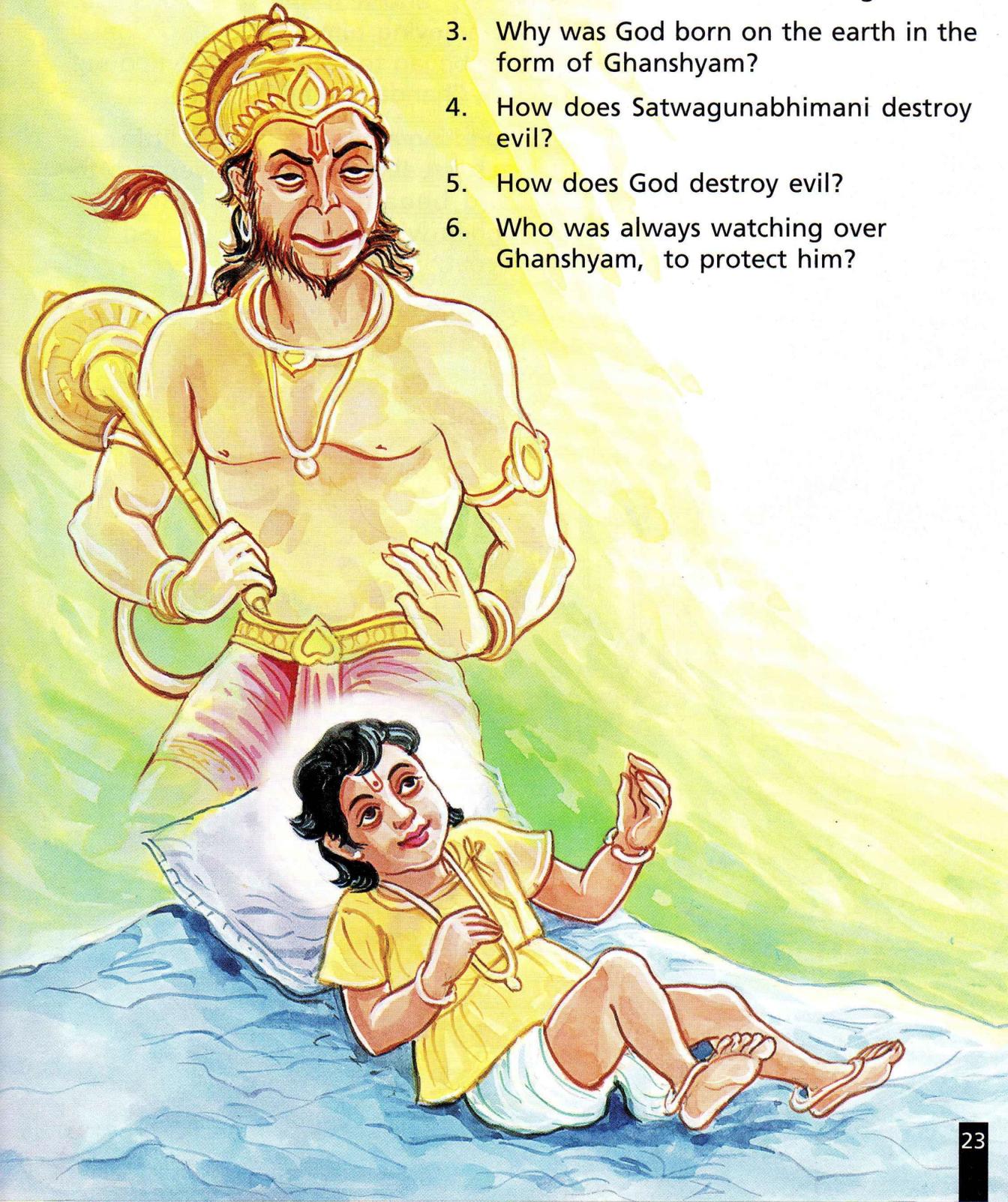
Satwagunabhimani also laughed when he heard this. "It is true, my Lord." he said, "But still, I will call on Hanumanji, and ask him to always protect you." And saying this he disappeared.

And so it was that that lord Hanuman, the monkey god, came to be in the service of Ghanashyam, always watching over him and protecting him.



STUDY:

1. Why are we born again and again?
2. Who came to visit Ghanashyam?
Describe what he was wearing.
3. Why was God born on the earth in the form of Ghanashyam?
4. How does Satwagunabhimani destroy evil?
5. How does God destroy evil?
6. Who was always watching over Ghanashyam, to protect him?



SURBHI AND HER CALF

Ghanashyam was just learning to walk. To help him learn, Chandanbai had got a wooden toy made. It had three wheels, and a frame to hold on to. Ghanashyam was enjoying himself. Holding tightly onto the frame he began to walk in the compound of the house, with Chandanbai by his side.

While he was toddling along, a beautiful little calf came into the garden. Immediately it went up to Ghanashyam, and began to lick him lovingly. Ghanashyam laughed with joy, and he stroked the little calf's silken coat.

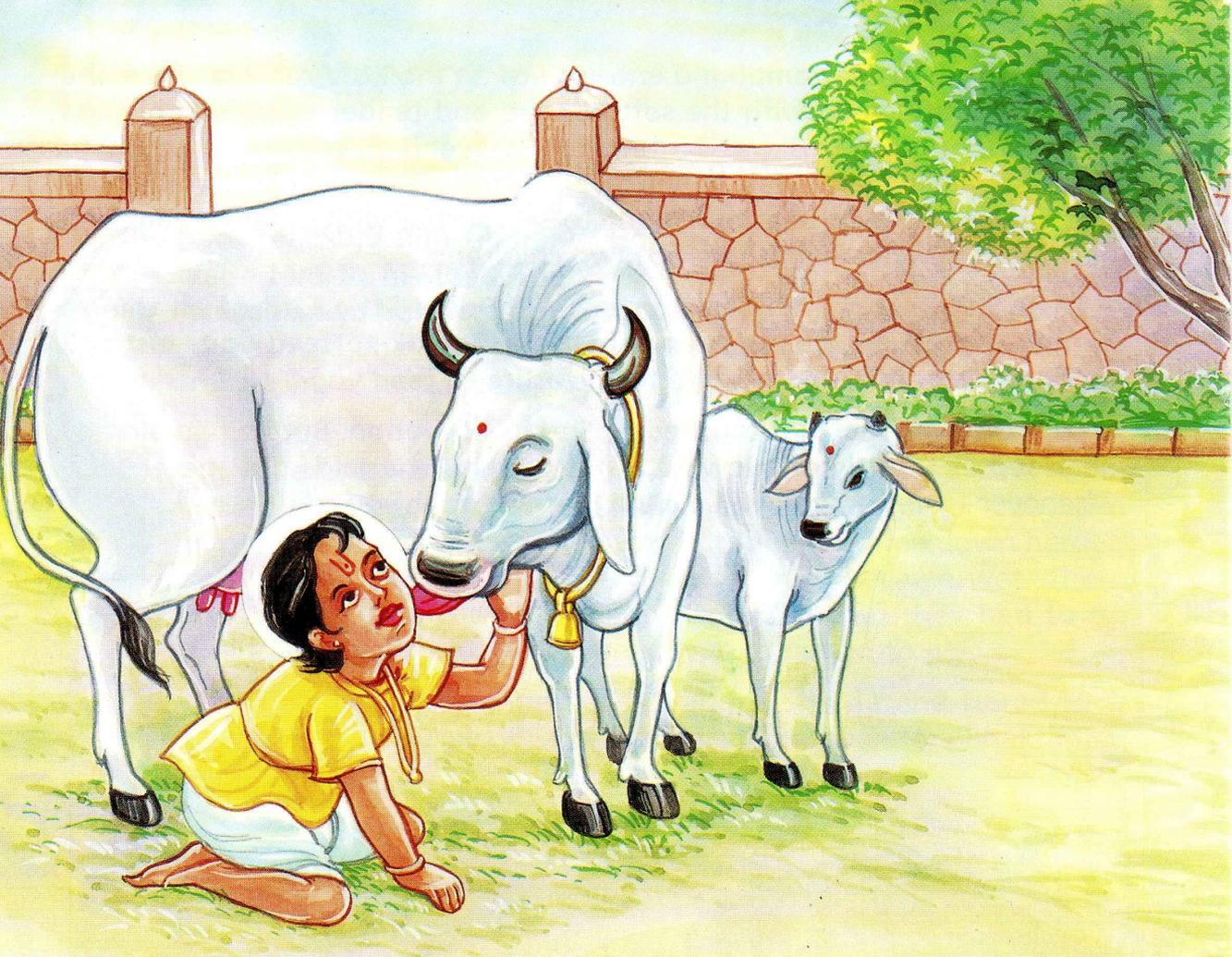


Then through the compound entrance came the little calf's mother. She was a beautiful cow, with the softest coat, and tender eyes. But this was no ordinary cow. This was Surbhi, the heavenly cow. She came up to Ghanashyam and the calf. Ghanashyam lifted his hand and stroked her soft cheek. It was a beautiful sight to see Surbhi with Ghanashyam and her calf. It was like a mother with two children.

Then Surbhi spoke to Ghanashyam. "My dear little lord of all things, Purna Purshottam, I have been sent from Gaulok to feed you. Just as I feed my own child, so it will be my pleasure to feed you."

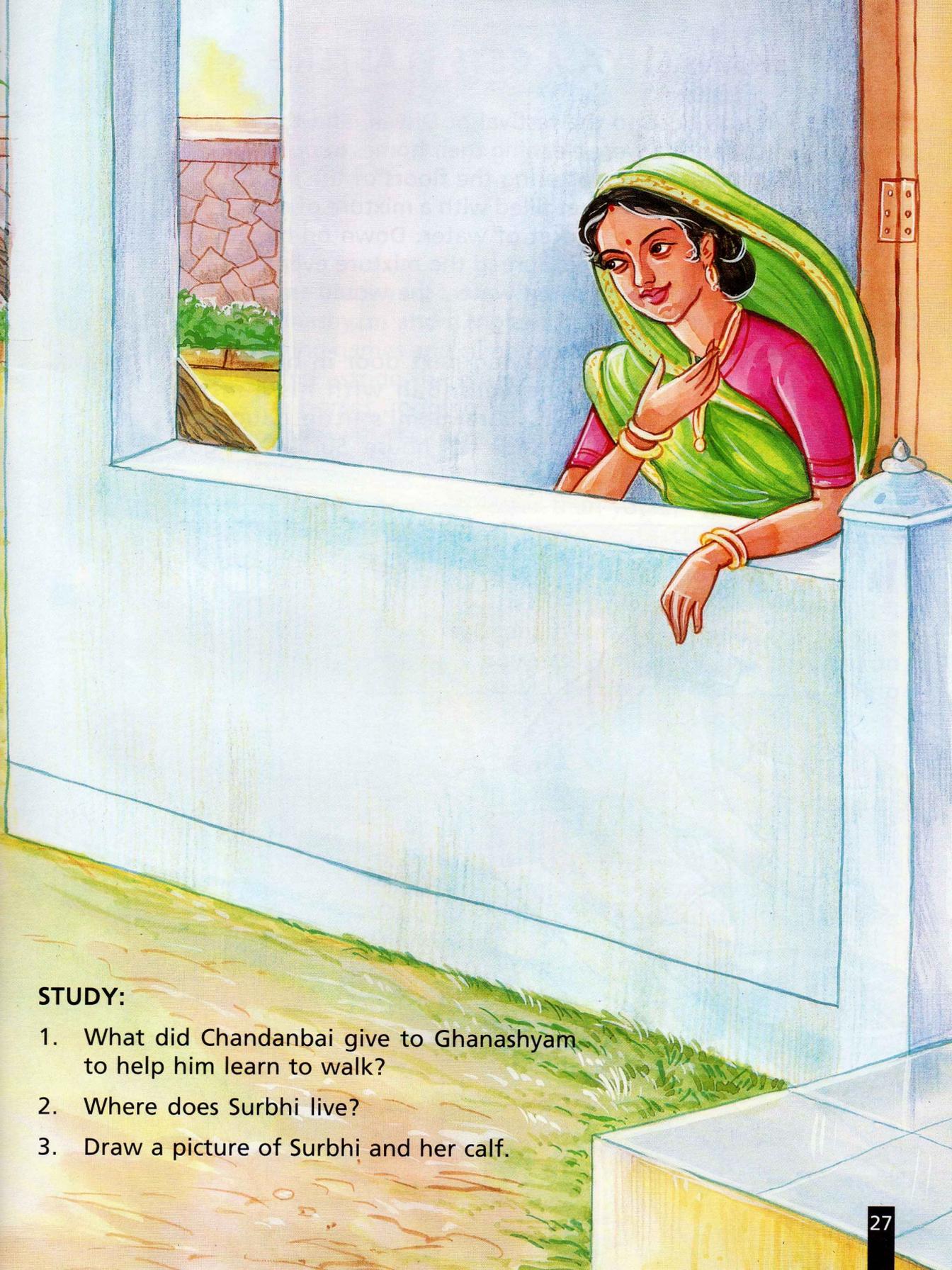
Lord Ghanashyam was touched by Surbhi's devotion. But he had already been fed at that time. "Now I am not hungry," he said, "But never fear, whenever I am hungry I will call on you and take your divine milk."





Surbhi licked the top of Ghanashyam's head in grateful devotion. Then calling her calf to follow, she returned to Gaulok.

Chandanbai had been watching all this with amazement. As Surbhi and her calf left, she picked up the little Ghanashyam, holding him close and smothering him with kisses.



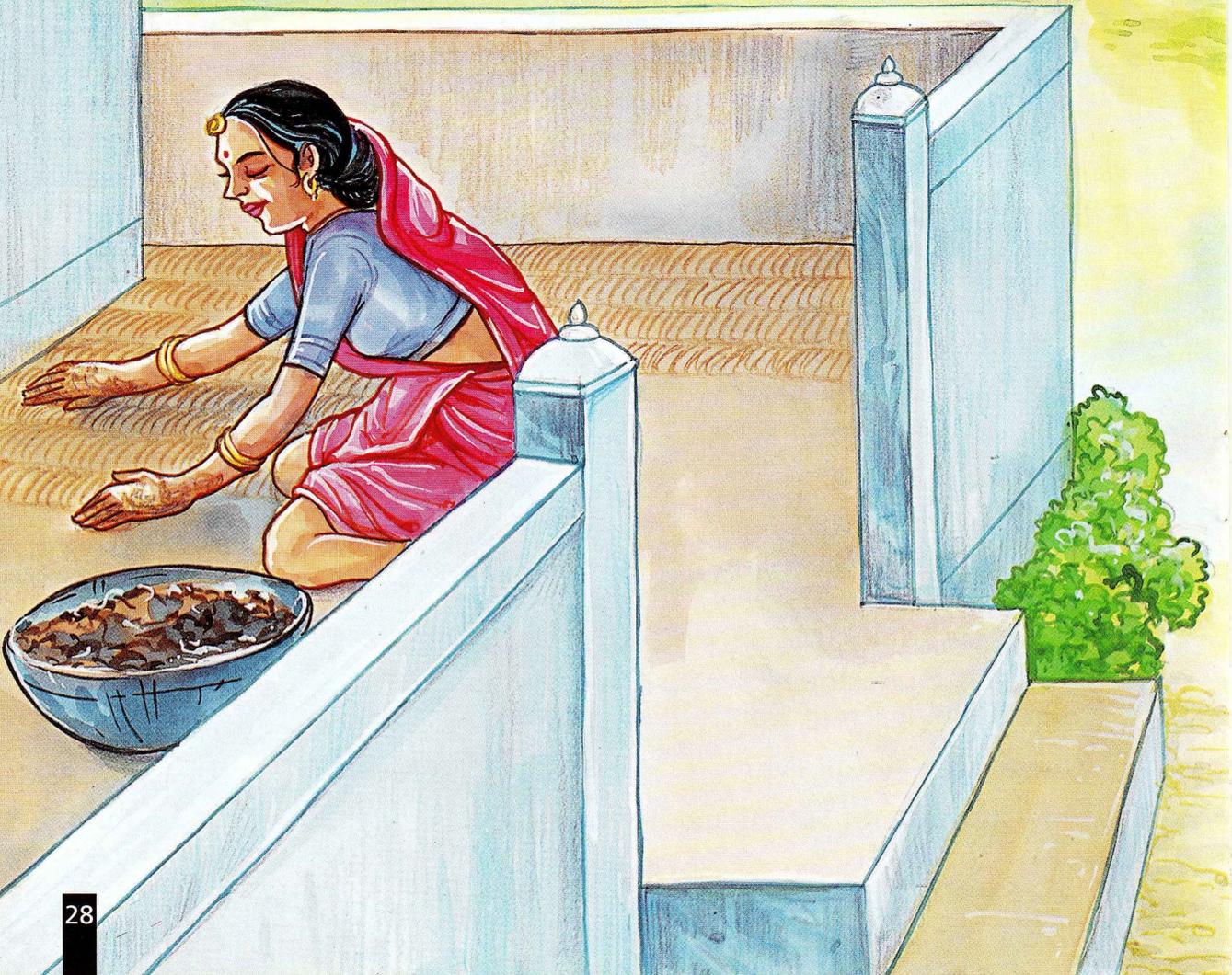
STUDY:

1. What did Chandanbai give to Ghanashyam to help him learn to walk?
2. Where does Surbhi live?
3. Draw a picture of Surbhi and her calf.

GHANASHYAM GETS PLASTERED

It was close to the festival of Diwali, and the people of Chappaiya were cleaning their homes in preparation. Bhaktimata was plastering the floors of the house. She had a big cane basket filled with a mixture of cow-dung and mud, and a bucket of water. Down on her hands and knees, she would spread the mixture evenly. Then, dipping her hand in the water, she would smooth the plaster into beautiful designs.

Ghanashyam was playing next door in his uncle's house, sitting on the verandah with his auntie, Surajmami. Just then, Surajmami's little daughter started crying from inside the house. Surajmami got



up and went inside. Suddenly finding himself alone, with no one to play with, Ghanashyam began to cry loudly.

Hearing his cries, Bhaktimata looked up from her plastering. She called out to him. "Come, my little lord. Your mother is here." When Ghanashyam heard the sweet sound of his mother's voice, his eyes lit up. Immediately he began to crawl across the verandah to the door of his own house. As he crawled, the little bells around his ankles made tinkled with his movement. It was a beautiful sound. Can you hear it?



Crawling inside the house he tinkled his way up to his mother, and sat near her. He watched her, pulling out the big dollops of mixture, and spreading it on the floor. It looked such fun! When his mother's back was turned, he crawled to the basket, and put his hands inside. The mixture was so soft and smooth. He pulled out a handful, and began to smear it all over himself!

When Bhaktimata turned back to the basket, she got a shock. "Chee, chee!" she cried. "What a dirty little boy you are!" And she picked up the basket of plaster and took it away. Ghanashyam began to cry.

At that moment a carpenter called at the house, looking for Rampratap. Seeing the muddy little Ghanashyam sitting on the floor and crying, he picked him up and took him outside. Dharmadev was in the garden sitting



under his favorite tree, reading the Manusmriti. The carpenter walked towards Dharmadev with the little Ghanshyam in his arms. As he walked, Ghanshyam began to get heavier and heavier! In no time at all, Ghanshyam was so heavy, that the carpenter couldn't carry him! Sweating with the effort, he put Ghanshyam down beside his father. "That son of yours is no ordinary child." he said.

Dharmadev laughed. But Ghanshyam was still crying. He wanted his mother. Bhaktimata came out of the house, wiping her hands on a towel. Picking up her muddy little baby, she took him off to the well for a





bath. As she scooped the water up from the bucket, and poured it over Ghanashyam's head, both mother and child laughed with joy to see the mud running from his body!

STUDY:

1. Do you like Diwali? Describe in your own words what you do on Diwali.
2. What was Bhaktimata doing to the floors of her house?
3. What was the mixture in the cane basket made from?
4. What sound did Ghanashyam make as he crawled across the floor?
5. What happened when the carpenter picked up Ghanashyam?

