

A positive psychology storytelling resource for children

Grade 1 to Grade 8.

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Grade 1

Story 1 - The fish of the south sea



Value: Compassion

Natasha said, "Nani, our teacher Ms Sharma showed us the South Sea today."

"The South Sea?" Nani asked.

"Let me then tell you a story from the South Sea," said Nani.

"Yes, Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

"This is the story of how Mynah's compassion saved Quari. There was once a fish called Mynah," began Nani, "who was as sweet as she was different. She loved playing around with purple colored stones that lined the seabed.

She would play with the stones while the other fish of her age would congregate around to do regular fish stuff - talk, share secrets and play.

One day, Mynah was playing with her purple stones, making lovely reconstructions of castles and other lovely places that she had heard about in the fish-fairy tales that her grandmother Daisy had told her. This day, the other Mynah-aged fishes were not playing as cheerfully as they usually did.

"Why was this, Nani?" asked Moni.

"Mynah looked up from her castle making and saw that one of the other fishes was wounded by a fishing hook. Mynah felt sorry for this fish called Quari and quickly swam to her grandmother's place to get a seaweed wound healer.

Mynah got the seaweed wound healer and put the herbal medicine on Quari. Quari recovered soon. Thus, Mynah's compassion saved Quari."

"Thank you Nani, what a lovely story," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 2: The Ant and the Grasshopper



Value: Friendliness

Natasha and Moni came back late from school. Two of their classmates had been quarrelling and their teachers had to stop the imminent fight by intervening. In the process the school buses had got delayed.

Natasha and Moni related the story to Nani.

"This is why the wise said it is important to maintain friendliness," said Nani, "let me tell you a story in this context. Once there was an ant called Hasi who sought to build her home and supplies, so that she would not fall short of food during the long winter. So, she worked hard, day in and day out trying to gather food for the coming winter.

As she worked hard, she would become terribly stressed and distressed **tired**.

She had terrible headaches all the time and used to feel terribly sick.

Around this time, she heard the sweet violin music of a grasshopper called Ivi.

Ivi was a musician par excellence and would keep composing lovely tunes to make the time pass. So, guess what happened?"

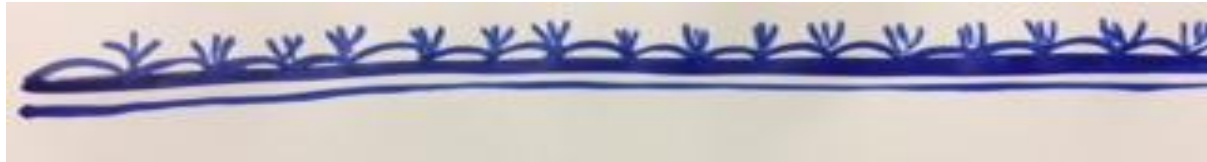
"What Nani, we don't know," said Natasha.

"The ant, did all her work," continued Nani, "while listening to the music of the grasshopper and started feeling much better. Ivi too was friendly to Hasi and didn't mind her listening to the music. Soon, winter came and it was time Hasi retired with her stock of supplies. Ivi however had been busy composing songs and was in distress now.

"Why don't you share with me?" asked Hasi. And Ivi did. And thus friendliness helped them both."

"Thank you, Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 3 -Amogha and the Tiger



Value - Helping Others

"What did you learn in school today?" Nani asked Moni and Natasha. "We celebrated the World Wildlife Day and a senior person from WWF spoke to the school assembly about the Bengal Tiger."

"Then, let me tell you a story about a tiger," said Nani.

"Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee," yelled Natasha.

"Amogha, a Jain monk, was travelling in the Chandrapur forest," said Nani, "when he came face to face with a deer that was running very fast. Soon a fierce tiger came into view and pounced on the deer. "Wait," said Amogha to the tiger. "Don't kill the deer. I will be your meal." The tiger abandoned the deer who looked gratefully at Amogha. "I won't eat you completely," said the tiger "I just want a piece of your thigh to appease my hunger." "Sure," said Amogha and he offered his thigh to the tiger."

"No..." shrieked Moni, "I don't want to hear this story, it is too gross."

"Hold on," said Nani with a smile, "Just then, the tiger turned into a luminous Deva from heaven. "I have come here to test you," said the Deva to Amogha. "And you have passed the test, you are a true monk - I bless you with eternal joy for the kindness you showed to this deer." "Thank you," said Amogha who was thrilled to see the Deva. The Deva left soon disappearing as an orb of light. Amogha and the deer lived in the forest - dedicating their lives to helping living beings around them."

"Thank God, Amogha didn't die," said Moni.

"Yes, thank God," said Natasha.

Story 4 - Balbhadra and the orphan



Value: Caring

"Tell us a sweet story Nani," asked Moni.

"Yes Nani," said Natasha.

"Let me tell you the story of Balbhadra," said Nani, "The impossible for Balbhadra was always possible. People said of him, "he has the shine of a chakravartin raja (a world emperor)" But Balbhadra was no king. The idea of weapons and violence that came with rulership frightened him. He wanted to conquer only with ahimsa. He was a Jain."

"How did Balbhadra spend his time?" asked Moni.

"He used to travel a lot by foot to understand the world," said Nani, "he loved rivers and lakes and made his home by waterside hamlets. He loved huts for their echoes and deep silences."

"What happened in Balbhadra's life?" asked Natasha.

"Once," said Nani, "Balbhadra came by an orphan who lived alone by the riverside.

Balbhadra adopted this orphan and gave him the name Lakshminath. He taught

Lakshminath how to read and write. He taught Lakshminath all about the principles

of truth, ahimsa and dharma. When Lakshminath grew up he set up an

orphanage for other orphans like him. Lakshminath cared for Balbhadra when he

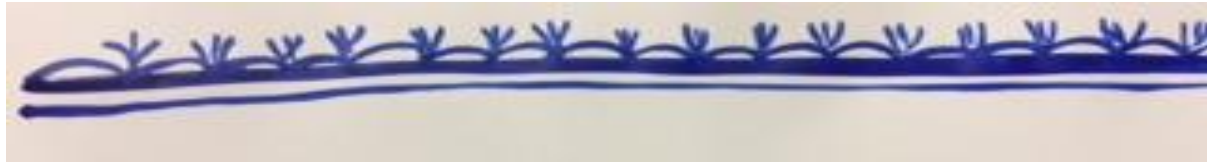
was old. This way the good are always cared for in this world."

"Like we will care for you Nani," said Moni.

"Yes Nani," said Natasha.

"Thank you my dears," said Nani.

Story 5 - Victor and the Moon



Value: Helping others

"Nani, you have such a nice smile," said Natasha.

"Yes Nani," said Moni.

"Let me tell you the story of someone with a nicer smile," said Nani.

"Yeeeeeeee," yelled Natasha and Moni.

"When Victor smiled his mouth used to touch the ears, said Nani, "he used to often smile at night because he loved the moon. On the nights when no moon could be seen, he would look glum. Now the *Angels* in heaven didn't like it when Victor was sad. So they created a small private moon that will always shine on top of Victor's head."

"What did Victor do then?" asked Moni

"Victor was so thrilled," said Nani, "that he decided to repay the *Angels* by always using the moon on top of head for the wellbeing of all living beings. So, on moonless

nights he would go to the homes of the poor who had no light and give them brightness. He thus spent his time helping others."

"Cool," said Natasha.

Story 6 - Dushyanta asks for forgiveness



Value - Forgiveness

"Nani... tell us a story," asked Moni and Natasha.

"Let me tell you the story of Dushyanta and the deer," said Nani and she continued,

"Shakuntala, the adopted daughter of the Sage Kanva,

lived in the forest. It was a lovely forest with some really nice animals,"

"Which was the animal Shakuntala loved the most?" asked Moni

"A really sweet deer," said Nani.

"What happened to the deer?" asked Natasha.

"One day, the king of Hastinapur, Dushyanta, came to the forest to

hunt. As he entered the forest, he saw Shakuntala's deer. He shot an arrow and wounded the deer. The poor animal fled," said Nani.

"How mean," said Moni.

"Shakuntala found the deer and slowly removed the arrow. Luckily, the deer was still alive. When Dushyanta came and saw Shakuntala gently tending the deer, his heart melted. He repented his cruelty and begged Shakuntala for forgiveness. Shakuntala forgave him and he stayed back in the forest to attend to the injured deer.

And thus, our story ends," said Nani

"Thank you Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 7 - The fisherman's forgiveness



Value: Forgiveness

"Nani, tell us a Hawaiian story," said Moni and Natasha.

"Let me tell you the story of the fisherman's forgiveness," said Nani, "Chief Kamehameha, brave and handsome, was going on a canoe with his men near the shoreline of Ke'eau. On the shore, they came upon some people fishing on the beach. Filled with rage unstoppable and their own warrior nature, they attacked these people. During the fight, Chief Kamehameha's leg got caught in lava rocks and he was trapped.

One of the fisherfolk could have easily killed him. But he let Chief Kamehameha live. The young chief never forgot this act of forgiveness. Filled with deep gratitude, Kamehameha made forgiveness a part of Hawaii's heritage, and its traditions.

That is why forgiveness is such an important value."

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha, "why is forgiveness such an important value?"

"Moni, Natasha, forgiveness teaches us not to keep grudges and to love people despite anything that may have happened in the past."

Story 8 - The story of Parshvanath



Value: Being a good role model

"Nani, what is the most important thing in life?" asked Moni.

"Moni, the most important thing is to have a good role model whom one can aspire to be like. Hear in this context, the story of the meditation of Parshvanath," said Nani." Once Parshvanath went into a garden and happened to see some paintings depicting the life of the 22nd *Tirthankara* Lord Arishtanemi. These paintings convinced him that he must become an ascetic and meditate for the well-being of all living beings. He first got the permission of his father to follow a spiritual life. Then, on the eleventh day of the dark half of the month of Paush, he became an ascetic under an Ashok tree.

"Is mediation easy?" asked Natasha.

"No dear, it is often very arduous because one is exposed to the elements of nature," said Nani. "Still, the brave persevere in meditation because it benefits millions of living beings on earth." Once Parshvanath was standing in meditation in

the Kaushamv jungle. The *Deva* Dharanendra came there and saw how the hot sun rays were falling on Parshvanath. The *Deva* used his powers to cover Parshvanath with cool snake hoods. Thus, brave spiritual warriors are always assisted by the good and by the gods."

"Thank you, Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Grade 2

Story 1: The evil of wastefulness



Value: Not being Wasteful

"Nani, what is the biggest vice?" asked Moni.

"Wastefulness is the biggest vice," said Nani, "let me tell you a story about this."

"Yessssssssssssssssss Nani," said Natasha and Moni.

"There was once a very wealthy man who did not value his riches and lived a very wasteful life. So much so that the drainage pipe of his house was filled with rice grains. The Buddha in one of his previous lives took the form of a monk who lived next door to this rich man. The monk knew that wastefulness was a sin. Everyday, he would collect the rice grains that came out of the rich man's drain, wash these and store them for the future.

Meanwhile one day, the rich man lost all his wealth. He and his wife became so poor that they had to beg for food. One day, they came to the monk's house asking for alms. The monk gave them the rice he had stored and told them how he got it. The

rich man was ashamed of his wasteful life *for* Now he knew the value of even a single grain of rice," said Nani.

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 2: Goodness wins the war



Value - Goodness

"Nani, tell us a story about the battle between the Gods and demons," said Natasha.

"In one of his past lives the Buddha was born as Sakka, the king of the *Devas*. He was ruling benevolently when a battalion of *asuras* attacked the heavens." Sakka went to fight the *asuras* in his golden chariot drawn by a thousand golden horses. But the *Devas* were not prepared for the battle. The *asuras* attacked them with increasing vigour and the *Devas* started fleeing."

"What did Sakka do?" asked Natasha.

"Sakka's charioteer Matali too turned the chariot **back** to flee. As he turned, the chariot was very close to an eagle's nest with baby eaglets ~~in the same~~, in it" said Nani, "Sakka saw the nest and ordered Matali to turn back so that the chariot doesn't crush the nest."

"Good..." said Moni, "what happened next?"

"The demons thought Sakka was returning to the battlefield with some advanced weapon. They got scared and they started fleeing. The *Devas* won the battle and also the heavens. Thus, the goodness of Sakka won the war.

"Thanks Nani, that was a lovely story," said Moni.

"Thanks Nani," said Natasha.

Story 3: The turtle and the geese



Value: Minding one's speech

"Nani, tell us another story," said Moni.

"A cute one," said Natasha.

"In a blue-green lake," began Nani, "filled with pink lotuses lived three friends - a turtle named Kambugreeva and two swans named Vikata and Sankata." "Once there was a dreadful drought and the lake dried up. The swans thought of flying to another lake. Kambugreeva, the turtle who couldn't fly wanted to go with them.

'Done-adone,' said the swans but do what we tell you to - 'hold a stick between your teeth and we will carry the stick through the skies. But remember never to open your mouth to speak or eat.'

"Yeee," the turtle agreed and the three friends coursed through the sky - a spectacular sight of camaraderie. They almost reached the lake and started descending when some people saw them and started wondering loud about the sight of the turtle and the swans. Just then Kambugreeva, forgetting his promise to his friends, opened his mouth to enquire about what had happened and alas fell from a

great height and got crushed. So learn that inappropriate speech is harmful and can actually kill you the way it did Kambugreeva," said Nani.

Story 4: The story of the flying dinosaur bird



Value - Nourishing the world

One day, Moni and Natasha came back rather tired from their school.

"What happened?" Nani asked.

"Exams have been announced. We have to work very hard," said Moni.

"Come, I will cheer you up with a story," said Nani.

"Once upon a time, during the time of the dinosaurs, there was huge flying dinosaur

~~bird~~ called Gabella. She was a very tempestuous bird, who always wanted her way.

Fed up with her, the dinosaur Witch Aribantan turned Gabella into the round sun.

But then she burnt people.

Next, the dinosaur Witch Aribantan turned her into ice. But Gabella just froze people. Next, the dinosaur Witch Aribantan mixed the round sun with the ice and Gabella this time turned into cool blue water. In this form she nourished the world. Dinosaur Witch Aribantan was happy.

"How did Gabella nourish the world?" asked Moni.

"Wherever there was a drought Gabella would go there and offer herself to the vegetation, animals, birds and people," said Nani.

"Cool," said Moni.

"Cool," added Natasha.

Story 5: The story of Right Raptor



Value: Kindness

"Nani, could you tell us a story," asked Natasha.

"Yes, Nani, do tell us a story," said Moni.

"I will tell you the story of Raging Raptor and Right Raptor," began Nani. "The Raging Raptor, the meanest alligator of all times, used to rule the world. It was a bleak world where all beings were forever parched. The earth was parched because of the terror of the Raging Raptor. The Raging Raptor had a kind son Right Raptor, who felt bad for the plight of the people. One day when Raging Raptor was sleeping, Right Raptor took two churning sticks and churned the earth till water sprang out. No one was thirsty again.

Next, Right Raptor took some clay and built houses for all creatures. They were all very happy with his kindness.

Raging Raptor got up from his sleep and became furious when he saw what Right Raptor had done.

He decided to attack Right Raptor and sprang at him. However Raging Raptor fell and broke his tail.

Right Raptor who was always kind felt sorry for Raging Raptor and got medicines to heal his tail. This act of kindness changed Raging Raptor and he was never mean after that."

"What a lovely story, thank you Nani," said Moni.

Story 6: Wayward Bird and Oneward bird



Value - Helping others

"Nani, tell us one of your favourite stories," said Natasha.

"Wayward bird and Oneward bird were friends. Wayward bird was a little deceptive while Oneward bird was very sweet. They would both eat mangoes which had fallen down. Wayward bird would eat all the juicy mangoes while Oneward bird was given all the rotten mangoes.

Because he ate all the good mangoes, Wayward bird became big and turned into the huge vulture. And because he couldn't grow on the rotten mangoes, Oneward bird became a tiny sparrow.

"Then what happened Nani?" asked Moni.

One day a small snake called Vol got caught in a hunter's trap. It was completely trapped and started wailing, "help me, please help me."

Both Wayward Bird and Oneward bird heard Vol crying. Wayward Bird ignored Vol's pleas. Oneward bird however wanted to help Vol.

Oneward bird examined how Vol was trapped."

"How?" asked Moni.

"Vol was trapped in a nylon net," said Nani, "And Oneward bird was tiny enough to get through the loops and then open the knots. In this way, she saved Vol."

"What a lovely story, Nani," said Natasha.

Story 7: The Sun and the Moon



Value - Nonviolence

"Nani, tell us another story," pestered Moni and Natasha.

"Once upon a time Sand was very sad. He didn't have any friends to play with. The Magician of Moor came and tried to cheer Sand up. He took a casket of clay in his hand and mixed it finely using a dinosaur bone ladle. He dipped the casket in hot volcano lava. The clay melted. The Magician of Moor buried the clay in a blue sky-cloud. Soon the clay turned into water. This water nourished the Earth and many many types of beings were born. They all became Sand's friends.

Sand noticed one thing about the about the animals that were his friends. The strong tended to eat the weak.

The lion would eat the deer etc. This filled Sand with grief. He wanted all the animals to be nonviolent."

"So, what happened?" asked Moni.

"Sand called the Magician of Moor and explained his problem - he didn't want the weaker beings to be eaten by the stronger ones.

So, the Magician of Moor created a new spell made of softdust water and lilac flowers, boiled gently. He put this spell on all the creatures and they all became nonviolent.

From that day, in Sand's world Lions stopped eating Deer.

Story 8: The bird and the sea



Value: Compassion

"Nani, tell us a story about Vishnu," said Natasha who was reading a book on Vishnu.

"Once upon a time," started Nani, "a pair of *tittibha* birds lived on the seashore."

"As the female bird was about to lay eggs she suggested, 'Let's go elsewhere, for the sea may wash away our eggs.' The male *tittibha* bird said, 'I am not in fear of the sea, the sea is nothing compared to me.'" The female bird stopped him reminding him of the might of the endless sea. The male bird however refused to leave the nest by the sea. The sea in the meantime heard ~~of the~~ what the bird had said and carried the eggs away.

The female bird cried and cried and said, 'what can we do to avenge this dreadful and relentless sea?'

The male bird met many other birds and they all went crying to *Garuda*, the king of birds.

Garuda in turn appealed to Vishnu, who being the supreme lord dried the sea with fire and ensured that the eggs were returned. Thus, the compassion of Vishnu saved the day."

Grade 3

Story 1 -The Story of Krishna and Kaliya



Value- Forgiveness

"Nani, tell us a story," asked Natasha.

"Once upon a time," began Nani "inside the famed river Yamuna, beloved of the blue-skinned Krishna, lived a multiheaded poisonous serpent called Kaliya.

Kaliya started poisoning the water of Yamuna and biting cows and cowherd boys - friends of Krishna.

Everyone was fed up with Kaliya, but then everyone was also scared of Kaliya. Everyone except Krishna that is.

Krishna simply jumped into the Yamuna and started wrestling with Kaliya. Kaliya growled and tried to bite and drown Krishna.

Soon Krishna climbed on top of Kaliya's head and started dancing. It was a magnificent dance. All of Krishna's friends and family came to watch. The devas in heaven showered flowers on Krishna. Soon, Kaliya was subdued.

The serpent begged Krishna to forgive him and promised to leave Yamuna forever. All rejoiced. Krishna once again saved the day. "

"Thanks Nani," said Moni.

Story 2 - The bear and the fox go into partnership



Value: Forgiveness

"Nani, tell us an animal fable," said Moni and Natasha.

"Once upon a time," said Nani, "the Reynard the fox and Bruin the bear decided to have a field in common. They found a small clearing in the forest, where they sowed rye the first year."

"Now we must share," said Reynard the fox. "If you will have the roots I will have the tops," he said.

Bruin the bear accepted this. When they had threshed the crop, the fox got all the grain, while the bear got nothing but the roots.

Bruin the bear didn't like this, but the fox reminded him of the agreement and said it was only as they had agreed. "This year I am the one who gained," said the fox. "Another year it will be your turn. You can then have the tops and I will be satisfied with the roots."

Next spring, the fox asked the bear if he thought turnips would be the best food for the year.

"Yes, that's better food than grain," said the foolish bear.

When the autumn came the fox took the turnips, but the bear only got the tops which were useless.

The bear parted company then and there with Reynard. But he forgave the fox."

"Thank you Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 3 - Wana and the crocodile



Value - Nonviolence

"Nani," said Natasha, "I am so scared of crocodiles."

"Me too," said Moni, "they are scary."

"Not all of them are, let me tell you Wana's story" said Nani.

"Wana, a nun, was loved by all beings. She was protection and kindness itself. When she was alone she would meditate on the great truths. People used to say of her,

"She has the bearing of a neem tree - tall and sacred." Wana once took a boat and floated down a river. She wanted to mediate on the principle of nonviolence.

Suddenly a storm shook the boat and it broke into two. Wana was alone without help in the turbulent river. She would surely drown. Just then a crocodile with open jaws came towards her. "This," Wana thought. "is the end of my life."

"Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeew" yelled Moni and Natasha.

"Listen," said Nani with a smile, "the crocodile gently clenched Wana without biting into her and threw her on its back. The crocodile then took Wana safely to the shore. Wana thanked the crocodile and set on the journey home, amazed at her

experience. This is the power of nuns who always mediate on nonviolence. Even fierce creatures like crocodiles help them."

"Wow, what a story.."said Moni.

"Thank you, Nani" said Natasha.

Story 4 - Henry leaves his palace



Value: Simplicity

"Naniii," pleaded Moni and Natasha, "tell us a story."

"One with a palace in it," said Moni, "a beautiful palace."

"Sure," said Nani, "I can tell you about Henry who had a lovely palace."

"Henry used to live with his dog with lovely golden hair in his palace built with unearthed marble ?. The lake in the palace was calm and peacocks wandered on the lawn. There is a luminous mystery to this palace."

"What was the palace called?" asked Moni.

"The Crown," said Nani and she continued with the story, "one day the great Saint Philip came to their palace. St Philip narrated to them the greatness of the saints. After St Philip left Henry felt disgusted with his lavish life at the palace. He wanted to live in great simplicity as a renunciate."

"So, what does he do?" asked Natasha.

"He handed over his palace to one of his nephews and left with his faithful dog," said Nani, "they built a small hut by the river and lived simply. One day, Henry fell

ill with pneumonia. His dog tended to him everyday, but he was very ill. Then they had a visitor. The great St Philip had come to see them. Immediately Henry recovered from his illness. Such is the greatness of saints."

"Cooooooooooooool," said Moni.

Story 5 - Pratyangira's story



Value: Being Good

"Nani, tell us a story about a God who is half man, half animal," said Moni.

"Let me tell you the story of Lord Narasimha and the Goddess Pratyangira. They are both half human, half lion."

"Yaaaaaaaay," said a clapping Natasha.

"Hiranyakashypu," started Nani, "was a terrible demon." "Now, most demons are terrible, you may say, what could be so specifically terrible about this

Hiranyakashypu. Well, Hiranyakashypu tried to kill his own son Prahlad several times very violently. Why, You may ask. Hiranyakashypu wanted to be worshipped as God himself while the righteous Prahlad believed that no one was God except the all-pervasive Vishnu. Thus, their argument continued and each time Hiranyakashypu tried to violently end Prahlad's life and each time Vishnu saved Prahlad. Finally, Vishnu was fed up with the situation and he decided to kill Hiranyakashypu ~~for~~ once and for all. Vishnu took the man-lion form or the Narasimha form - with the head of a lion and the body of a man - to kill the evil Hiranyakashypu. Narasimha clawed

out the intestines of the demon and ended his life. In the process, Narasimha became very angry and agitated. He started destroying the three worlds. Shiva was alarmed and took the form of Sarabeshwara to calm Narasimha. As Sarabeshwara, he was in a part lion, part bird form. But Sarabeshwara couldn't calm Narasimha. From his wings emerged two Goddesses, Soolini Durga and Pratyangira. Of these Pratyangira had a thousand lions heads and the body of a woman. She was seated on a chariot driven by lions. She was knowledge incarnate. She went to Lord Narasimha and asked him, "Why do you want to destroy the worlds? Destroy me instead, don't kill anyone else." On hearing the Goddess's desire to sacrifice herself for the wellbeing of the worlds, Lord Narasimha became calm. He took his peaceful Vishnu form and remained as a benefactor of the three worlds. Thus, the good are able to elicit good in others."

"Amazing," squealed Moni.

Story 6 - The end of Raktabeeja's wickedness



Value: Bravery

"Nani, tell us a very interesting story about the goddess," said Natasha and Moni.

"Once upon a time, there lived a wicked *asura* called Raktabeeja. He loved killing and tormenting humans on earth," said Nani. "One day, he decided to engage in *tapasya* so that he will live forever as an immortal. So great was his penance that Brahma the creator God had to respond to Raktabeeja."

"Did Brahma grant Raktabeeja immortality?" asked Moni.

"No," said Nani, "but he granted Raktabeeja the boon that the moment a drop of his blood fell on the ground another Raktabeeja would instantly pop up. Raktabeeja became intoxicated with this boon and went to attack the *Devas*. When the *Devas* tried to defend themselves by attacking Raktabeeja, they found that their wounding Raktabeej only made matters worse - thousands of Raktabeejas came into being."

"So, what did the *Devas* do?" asked Natasha.

"The troubled *Devas*," said Nani, "worshipped the Goddess for succour. And she took her Kali form to help the *Devas* against Raktabeeja."

"But surely, who can help against Raktabeeja?" asked Moni.

"The goddess Kali could. She just extended her long tongue and drank up all of Raktabeeja's blood before it fell on the ground. The *Devas* were now able to successfully attack and kill him," said Nani.

Story 7 - She who arrives promptly



Value: Promptness

"Nani, why is it important to do things in time," asked an exasperated Moni, who had not finished her homework.

"Let me tell you a story in this context," said Nani, "the story of the Goddess who arrives promptly." "Anubhuti, the wife of the sage Kardama was very intelligent and spiritual. When her husband died, she left for the forest to do penance. She practiced meditation for a long time. During this time, she experienced oneness with the universe and all living beings. She felt reality was one and not two. She understood that the visible world was an illusion and the highest reality was extremely benign. While Anubhuti was thus immersed in meditation, Kukkua ? a demon saw her. He didn't believe that the universe was one. He believed in power and violence. He wanted to harm Anubhuti. Anubhuti prayed for help from the higher forces that mankind ruled the universe. The Goddess Sakti responded immediately. She assumed an eight armed form and killed the demon. Because the Goddess immediately responded to Anubhuti's plea, she is known as Tulaja (one who

appears promptly). "I came immediately," Tulaja told Anubhuti, "because delay could have caused injury. This is the law." So, like Tulaja always remember the importance of being prompt," said Nani.

Story 8 - The bravery of Kaalratri



Value: Bravery

"Nani, tell us a story about a fierce Goddess," asked Natasha.

"Let me tell you about Kaalratri, she is the a very compassionate goddess, as most fierce Goddesses are," said Nani.

Kaalratri is the seventh of the Navadurgas. She is the fiercest form of Adi Shakti. She causes fear and grants fearlessness. It was Kaalratri who put this universe in place. She was there before the cosmos began and was lauded by Mahabrahma who sought her powers for the creation of the cosmos. It was she who said that matter and energy will infuse the material world. Of matter there will two types - sentient and insentient. She then blessed the sentient matter with consciousness. Because all sentient matter has been blessed by consciousness endowed by Kaalratri, all beings contain a part of Kaalratri and are divine.

"Nani, tell us how Kaalratri was compassionate?" asked Moni.

"Let me tell you a story in this context. Once upon a time, many millennia after the universe was created, there came into being an asura called Ratnaprabha or Shining Jewel.

Shining Jewel was born of an asuric yagna conducted by the learned Rakshasa Ravana. Hence, Shining Jewel was very erudite. He quickly comprehended that the world was composed of intelligence and consciousness. Though he was a asura by birth, he practiced ahimsa. As a consequence of which Kaalratri was pleased with him and granted him a Deva body. He now lives in the heaven of Indra. Thus, the idea of devas and asuras are not fixed constants - devas and asuras could be interchangeable. One can turn into a deva after being born as an asura, as was the case with Shining Jewel. All creatures including asuras are endowed with Kaalratri's divine consciousness and, if they choose to awaken this within, they too can become completely divine. Like snakes shed their skin so too can asuras shed their exterior and resort to realize the divine within. In this manner Kaalratri was compassionate with Shining Jewel."

Grade 4

Story 1 - The story of the Goddess Dhumavati



Value: Compassion

"Tell us a story Nani," said Moni.

"Tell us a story about a grandmother," said Natasha hugging Nani.

"Let me tell you the story of the grandmother of the Gods, the great goddess Dhumavathi," said Nani.

"The goddess Dhumavathi was a Dasa Mahavidya, one of the ten great wisdom goddesses of wisdom who pervaded the cosmos. Despite being unbelievably powerful, she always wore rags from the cremation ground. Her cloths were dirty and torn. She sat on a chariot that had a crow emblem; the crow being the symbol of death and disease. She was terribly old and often diseased.

One day Bhairav asked her, "Why do you live like this? Being a great goddess you can take any form at will."

The goddess Dhumavathi responded, "I live like this because millions of poor people live without proper clothes or a place to stay. And every human being grows old and falls ill; I represent this cosmic reality.

The poor and old are all my people and I believe in living like my people. Because they live in suffering, I suffer too."

"Great you are," said Bhairav. And that is the story of the cosmic grandmother," said Nani.

"Thank you Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 2 - The forgiveness of Sage Parashara



Value: Forgiveness

"Nani, our teacher told us that forgiveness is what keeps the world going," said Moni.

"It does," said Nani. "Let me tell you the story of the forgiveness of Sage Parashara, which he narrates in the Vishnu Puran," said Nani.

"In this story, Sage Parashara said, 'Let me tell you the story of how I acquired great knowledge. Once the Sage Vishwamitra created a Rakshasa who devoured my father. Infuriated with this knowledge, I embarked upon a yagna to destroy all the rakshasas. Soon with my powerful yagna I threatened the entire race of the rakshasas with immediate annihilation. Meanwhile my grandfather the wise sage Vashishta spoke to me and said that so much rage was not good and every rakshasa was not responsible for my father's death. He said that it had been my father's fate to die, because everyone had to face the fruits of their deeds and it was pointless to get angry about this. Anger, he told me, ~~was pointless and~~ was only conducive to destroying the gains of deep penance. Hence, my grandfather told me, ascetics always followed the path of forgiveness and forsake any residue anger.

Understanding that forgiveness was what I needed to adopt as my ascetic garb, I stopped the yagna. Immediately Brahma's son Pulastya congratulated me and blessed me, "For this great act of forgiveness you will learn all the scriptures and give produce commentaries on the Puranas. You will also understand the true nature of the Gods." My grandfather who was there also blessed me that this boon of Pulastya will surely come to pass."

"Thank you Nani, that was a great story," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 3 - Bheema forgives Duryodhana



Value: Forgiveness

"Nani, tell us a story from the Mahabharata," said Moni and Natasha.

"Sure," said Nani.

"Bheema was a Pandava and the son of the Wind God," started Nani. "This is a story from when Bheema was 16. Bheema was the strongest and most charming of the Pandavas. There was no match for his physical power and no wrestler could defeat him. His cousin Duryodhan, was immeasurably envious of Bheema's might. He was also afraid that with his cousin Bheema's power the Pandavas would rule Hastinapur.

Evil-minded by temperament, Duryodhan hatched a plot to kill Bheema. He invited Bheema and his brothers to a picnic. In Bheema's food he mixed terrible poison. Soon Bheema lost consciousness and fell on the grass. Duryodhan distracted the rest of the Pandavas so that they don't know about what is happening. Next, the cunning Duryodhan had the unconscious Bheema tied in ropes and thrown into the sea."

"What happened next?" asked Moni.

"In the sea, Bheema landed in the abode of the Nagas, the snake people.

They felt great pity for the unconscious boy and they revived him by sucking the poison out of his body. Due to this, Bheema's strength doubled. He bid adieu to the Nagas, who dropped him back to the shore, and went back to the Pandavas. His mother Kunti and brothers, Yudhishtra, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva were happy to see him. Bheema forgave Duryodhana for his misdemeanor, **misconduct**" said Nani.

"Thank you Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 4 - The sons of King Sagar



Value: Being humble

"Nani, were people happy when India was earlier ruled by kings?" asked Natasha.

"It really depended on whether the royal rulers were good and fair or wicked and arrogant. In this context, listen to the story of the sons of Emperor Sagar," said Nani.

"Emperor Sagar conquered the six continents and became a Chakravarti Raja an emperor. He had thousands of Queens and sixty thousand sons the eldest among whom was known as Janhu Kumar. Once, the princes decided to go on a tour. They went to the base of the Astapad hills and dug up large ditches and canals. These they flooded with the water of the river Ganges without any consideration for the living beings in this area. The, flood caused by the princes, submerged the villages of the gods known as the Nagkumars. The king of the Nagkumars, Jwalanprbh, tried to stop the princes."

"Did the princes listen?" asked Moni.

"No dear. They were intoxicated with their royal power," said Nani.

"What happened then?" asked Natasha.

"The king of the Nagkumars, Jwalaṅkībh, became furious and he turned the princes into ashes.

"What happened to Emperor Sagar?" asked Natasha

"Emperor Sagar went into a state of deep shock and he handed over the empire to his eldest grandson, Bhagirath. He then took Diksha from Bhagavan Ajitnath."

Story 5 - The story of Harischandra



Value: Renunciation

"Nani, tell us a story," said Moni and Natasha.

"There was in former times," began Nani, "a king called Kuruchandra. His wife was known as Kurumati and his son as Hariscandra. The king was forever engaged in enterprises that caused injury. He was the first and foremost in ignoble acts and without pity like the God of Death. Even though he was wicked and cruel, he enjoyed the kingdom for a long time. At the time of his death, he became greatly afflicted. Afflicted by fever, he died painfully. His son Harishcandra, performed the funeral rites and governed the kingdom properly. Knowing how painful his father's death had been, he never severed from the path of Dharma.

One day Harischandra instructed Subuddhi, his childhood friend, "Learn about dharma every day and recite the lessons to me." Thus, everyday Subuddhi taught the king dharma.

"One day Subuddhi appraised the King that the Muni Silandhara, who had obtained omniscience, was outside the city. The Muni delivered a sermon that the King heard

intently. After the sermon the King asked of the Muni, "Where did my father go after death?"

The Muni said, "To the Seventh Hell."

Hearing this, the King became disgusted with worldly life and he resolved to become a mendicant. His friend Subuddhi made a similar resolution. After observing the life of a mendicant for several years the Kings and Subuddhi attained emancipation."

"Thank you Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 6 - The story of Aimi



Value: Meditation

"Nani, tell us a story," said Moni and Natasha.

"There was once a Japanese King named Aimi," said Nani, "whose rule was cruel. He had a son called Akako who was splendid like the son. Aimi was full of worldly desires. When he died, he was reborn in his own treasury as a keelback (?) snake. Cruel by nature, he killed whoever entered the treasury.

One day, Akako entered the treasury and Aimi recollected his past life and realized this was his own son. Akako also suspected that the keelback snake was some relation of his. Soon through the insight of the zen masters, Akako too discovered that the snake was his father. Akako then instructed his father in the zen dharma. Aimi understood the religion (and) adopted renunciation. He died in good meditation and turned into a god.

Such is the power of meditation," said Nani.

Story 7 - The vow of attadana



Value: non-grasping

"Nani, tell us a story," said Natasha and Moni.

"There lived in a city called Laksmidhara," began Nani, "a merchant named Gunadhara. He was rich, but he was a man of simple and unassuming habits. One day, he went to the park, where a muni was giving a sermon on *adattadana*."

"What is attadana, Nani?" asked Moni.

"It is," said Nani, "the value of not acquiring anything unless a thing is bestowed or bequeathed."

"What happened then Nani?" asked Natasha.

"When the sermon was over, the merchant came near the muni, paid him homage and obeisance and took the vow of *adattadana*. The merchant started for another country with a convey of 500 carts, loaded with merchandise. When the convoy reached the dense forest, the merchant felt it would be risky for him to move with it. So, on horseback he separated from the costly load and took an obscure route

lined with footprints. On the way he came across an expensive necklace which he did not care to look at. Ahead he found a jar with treasure but with perfect detachment, he moved ahead. Thus, Gunadhara kept his vow of adattadana."

"Wow, thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 8 - The heavenly forest



Value: Helping others

"Nani, tell us a cute story," said Natasha and Moni.

"Once," began Nani, " a charming girl called Sally used to spend her time looking after cattle. One day, she sat under a tree and fell asleep. While she was thus sleeping, a snake came and spoke to her in a human voice. 'Help me,' said the snake.

'I am in great distress, some snake charmers are looking for me.'

'Place me in your lap and cover me with a cloth,' the snake pleaded.

'Sure,' said the brave girl Sally and she helped the snake.

When the snake charmers came, they were sure the snake couldn't be where the girl was. So they left the place. Sally opened the cloth on her lap and saw that the snake had disappeared. When she looked up, an angel was in front of her, blessing her with his hand.

'I am pleased with you,' said the angel, 'for giving shelter to the snake. You are generous and courageous.'

'Ask me for any boon that pleases you.'

'I want nothing for myself, but a forest cover for my cattle is what I wish for,' said Sally. 'So be it,' said the smiling deva and granted Sally her wish. Thus, a heavenly forest was created around Sally and her cattle - a forest filled with fruits and lovely flowers."

"Thanks Nani, that was a lovely story," said Natasha and Moni.

Grade 5

Story 1 - How the squirrel got its stripes?



Value: Helping others

"Nani, tell us a short story from the Ramayana," asked Natasha.

"Long, long ago," began Nani "there lived a dangerous demon named Ravana. He carried away Sita, the wife of Prince Rama, while they were living in the forest and serving the sages. Prince Rama was an avatar of Vishnu and a god incarnate. He had descended to earth with the sole purpose of slaying Ravana and his Rakshasa ie hoards.

On Earth, Rama had befriended the monkeys to help him locate Sita and slay the Rakshasas. The monkeys found out that Ravan a had carried off Princess Sita to his island kingdom Lanka. For Rama and the monkey army to reach the island Lanka a bridge had to be built from India.

The monkeys were building the bridge with large stones carved with the name of Rama. Suddenly they noticed a little squirrel scurrying by. It was carrying a pebble in its feet.

"What are you doing?" asked Rama.

"I am trying to help you save Sita," said the squirrel.

"How?" asked Rama.

"I am adding to your bridge by laying these pebbles on top of your stones," said the shy squirrel.

"What?" laughed the monkeys, "you will build the bridge to Lanka with pebbles?"

Just then as gusty wind swept off the squirrel and she fell down. Rama picked her up.

Hanuman, the monkey hero, discovered something, "O Rama without her pebbles the bridge will sink."

Rama turned to the army and said, "See, no effort small or big with the right intent goes to waste."

The monkeys applauded the squirrel.

Rama to show his pleasure ran three fingers along the squirrel's back - causing stripes to form. And after that day all squirrels had stripes and they are known as the most helpful beings on earth."

"Thanks Nani," said Natasha and Moni.

Story 2 - Krishna Grows Pearls



Value: Friendship

Once long ago, some days before Diwali, the Gopis, the cowherd girls, were making pearl necklaces to wear during the festival.

Krishna, the mischievous one, saw them and asked for some pearls for his dear cows Harini and Hasini.

"Cows don't wear pearls, girls do," scoffed the Gopis and they refused to part with the pearls.

Krishna went to his mother Yashoda and asked his mother for some pearls. She, the doting mum, gave them to him. Krishna went and planted the pearls in the garden and poured milk on the seeds.

"Pearls are from the ocean and don't grow like trees," said an exasperated Yashoda. But she didn't stop him.

"Ha,Ha" the Gopis again laughed at Krishna, who ignored the criticism and merrily milked the pearl seeds.

Soon, the seeds sprouted and started growing. No one could believe their eyes. "It must be a wild bush," the Mocking gopis said. But it was not. It was actually a plant blossoming with pearl **clusters** bunches.

Krishna took the pearls and decorated the cows, the monkey and buffalo with it. The Gopis begged for his magnificent pearls, which were so much better than theirs, but he ignored them.

Soon, the Gopis developed a great desire for pearls like Krishna's. They decided to grow some pearls themselves. So they planted pearls in their garden and watered the seeds with milk and ghee. But alas no pearl sprout grew.

Krishna heard of their plight and decided to surprise them. He made pearlsets for Radha and the gopis. He had these pearl sets sent across. Radha and Gopis squealed in delight. They revelled in their new gift. They sent Krishna some delicious food in return.

Story 3 - Percy and the talking lotus



Value: Kindness

"Nani, can plants talk?" asked Natasha.

"Sure, they can," said Nani, "let me tell you the story of a talking plant that Percy knew."

"Yaaaay," shouted Moni.

"Percy, a young monk, loved lotuses," said Nani, "he would spend hours sitting next to the lotus pond admiring them. One day, when he was thus engaged a lotus spoke to him.

"I was," she said, "a princess in my past life. Very tall, beautiful and deep voiced. I was loved by all. I was always adorned with diamonds - on my chest, forehead and in my ears. One day a thief came, cut my throat and took away my diamonds. And I was reborn as this lotus."

"Can I help you turn to a princess again?" asked Percy.

"As far I know only the Sun can help in this matter," said the lotus.

Percy bid adieu to the lotus and started on this mission to ask the Sun to help."

"How did Percy reach the sun?" asked Moni.

"The path of the solar orb was difficult for Percy," said Nani , "and the heat burnt his body completely. But none the less he persisted in his journey for he wanted to help the lotus. When he finally reached, the Sun was surprised to see him - completely burnt, in severe pain but still smiling. The Sun extended his hand and immediately healed Percy. Percy then told the Sun about the purpose of the visit - to turn the lotus back into the princess she once was."

"Did the Sun want to help the lotus?" asked Moni.

"The Sun said he will help," said Nani, "and they both went to the lotus pond, this time in the Sun's comfortable chariot. The Sun turned the lotus into the lovely princess she once was and this made Percy very happy. He had thus helped the lotus.

"Wow, Nani that's a lovely story," said Moni

"Yes, it sure is," said Natasha.

"Thank you," said Nani.

Story 4 - The story of Dronacharya



Value: Concentration

"Tell us a story from the Mahabharata," said Moni.

"Sure," said Nani.

"In Hastinapur, Bheeshma was responsible for arranging for the training and education of both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. He handed over the children to the guru Kripacharya. Kripacharya lived with his sister Kripi. She was married to the ace archer Dronacharya, the son of Sage Bharadwaja. They had one son Ashwathama.

"So, Dronacharya was also in Hastinapur?" asked Natasha.

"Yes, Drona had come to Hastinapur after his fight with the Panchala King Drupad."

"How did this fight happen?" asked Moni.

"Drona and Drupad were educated together in the Sage Bharadwaj's ashram. After they grew up, Drupad returned to Panchala to become its king.

Drona married Kripi and they too moved to Panchala. Here, they were poor and their son Ashwatthama had never even seen cow's milk. Once, some boys in the

neighbourhood teased Ashwathama - giving him some rice paste to drink and claiming that it was milk. Drona felt his son's sorrow at being poor and decided to ask King Drupad for help. King Drupad however only insulted Drona and refused to help him.

Drona and Kripa moved to Hastinapura to live with Kripa," said Nani.

"Did Dronacharya also teach the Princes?" asked Moni.

"Yes, he did," said Nani, "but after Bheeshma discovered his greatness. Once while the princes were playing, a ball fell into the well. Drona was passing by. He made a magical chain of *darbha* grass and pulled the ball out. The princes clapped. "Watch this," he said. He threw a golden ring into the well. He then shot an arrow such that the arrow brought back the ring to him.

Bheeshma heard of this and appointed Drona as the preceptor of the children along with Kripa. After this, Drona was no longer short of funds. Ashwathama studied with the princes. However, Drona used to give Ashwathama some secret lessons. Arjuna found out about this and started learning archery whenever Drona taught Ashwathama. Arjuna soon became an expert in archery, more so than the others.

Soon, it was time for Drona to test his students.

He placed a toy bird on top of a tree. "What do you see?" he asked each of his students.

And each except Arjuna answered, "the bird, the tree and the sky."

Arjuna alone answered, "I can only see the eye of the bird."

Drona didn't let any of his students shoot except Arjuna. "You, Arjuna alone have mastered the essence of archery," said Drona, pleased with his pupil."

Story 5 - The story of Varaha



Value: Protecting the weak

"Nani, tell us a story about how the world is created and protected," said Moni.

"Sure ," said Nani.

"At the end of the previous Kalpa the divine Brahma awoke from the night of sleep and beheld the void. He was none other than the incomprehensible Narayana.

Because the waters are called Nara and Ayana is the dwelling, he the supreme one is known as Narayana, one who dwells in the waters.

He realized that the earth lay buried within the waters due to demonic influence.

The weak and vulnerable humans were suffering and dying. Desirous of raising her up and protecting the humans, Hari took the form of a boar in this Kalpa. The divine boar, having a form composed of the Vedic sacrifice, jumped into the ocean.

The goddess Earth looked on with delight and sang a hymn in adoration of the Lord who had come to rescue her."

The earth said, "I seek you for refuge and hence my name is Madhavi, the consort of Madhava.

Eternal triumph to you who are the essence of all wisdom and who are the sinless lord of Yagna (sacrifice). You are the Yagna, you are the syllable Om that is recited, you are the sacred fire, you are the Vedas and the Vedangas and you are Hari, the actual object of worship in the yagna."

Parashara said, 'Narayana thus being hymned by the earth simply lifted the earth from the lowest regions with his tusks. The sages were inspired by the sight and eulogized Varaha."

Parashara said, "Varaha raised the earth quickly and placed it on the summit of the waters, from where it does not sink and where humans remain protected . He then levelled the earth and divided it into seven parts. He created four lower regions, the earth, sky, heaven, and the region of the seers. In this manner the earth and all the human beings who were vulnerable were protected by Varaha." "So," said Nani, "goes the story of Varaha in Vishnu Puran."

Story 6 - The story of Chika



Value - Compassion

"Nani, tell us a story," said Moni and Natasha.

"This story is comes from in Japan," said Nani, "where lived Eika. Eika had two doctors - Botan and Chika."

"What sort of doctors?" asked Moni.

"Chika, was a good one. He used to talk gently to his clients. He always prescribed suitable medicines."

"And Botan?" asked Natasha.

"Botan had the least concern for his patients and would prescribe them strange cures that caused pain rather than wellness."

"What happened to them?" asked Moni.

"Once," said Nani, "Eika asked the Amitabh Buddha, 'Where will these two doctors be born?'

Said Amitabh Buddha, 'Botan will be reborn in the seventh hell called Apratishthana.

And Chika will be reborn as a monkey near the great river Shinano.'

'What will happen to him?' asked Eiko.

Amitabh Buddha said, 'When Chika grows up he will become a leader of a troop of monkeys. One day, a group of Buddhist monks will pass by the areas where the monkeys stay. One of the monks will suffer terribly on account of a thorn being stuck in his feet. The monkeys will hear his cries and gather around him. When the leader of the troop Chika sees the monk, he will remember his past life as a doctor. He will bow down before the monk and examine the wound. He will leap across the mountain to gather the right herbs that can extract the thorn out of the feet and heal the wound. After applying these the monk will be relieved of his suffering. The monk will instruct Chika in right conduct. And Chika will die in a few days and be born and as a god with a beautiful and wonderful body. Thus, Chika will be rewarded for his compassion.'

"And, thus ends the story," said Nani.

"Thanks Nani," said Natasha and Moni

Story 7 - The story of the garden



Value - Helping others

"Nani, tell us a story with a magical ending," said Natasha.

"Yes," said Moni.

"Listen to this," said Nani, "Manibhadra built a magnificent Jina temple with high gates and colorful flags. Kuladhara's daughter went to the Jina temple every day to offer prayer and worship. Kuladhara's daughter came in contact with nuns and acquired knowledge of the NAVA TATTVAS - nine doctrines of Jainism."

One day Kuladhara's daughter found that Manibhadra was deeply immersed in anxiety. For the worship of the god in the Jina temple the king had entrusted Manibhadra with the maintenance of a flower garden. Suddenly, all the flowers in the garden became dry. Manibhadra was not able to restore them to freshness. That is why he was worried.

When Kuladhara's daughter heard of Manibhadra's difficulty she resolved to help him by fasting till the garden was restored to freshness. Kuladhara's daughter returned to the Jina temple and bowed before the image of the deity. She then

assumed the *kayotsarga*, a yogic posture in which she completely left behind all thoughts of her physical being. Kuladhara's daughter then meditated on the great tirthakaras and completely renounced all food and water. On the fourth day, Sasanadevi, the protecting goddess of the Jina order appeared to bless her. The devi promised Kuladhara's daughter that the garden would be restored by morning."

"And did the goddess do that?" asked Moni.

"Yes, she did," said Nani, "and thus, all the flowers regained their freshness."

"Thanks Nani, that was indeed a magical ending," said Natasha.

Story 8 - How wealth destroys



Value - Not being greedy

"Nani, tell a quick story," said Moni.

"Sure," said Nani.

"A Jain monk once came across a chest of gold and gemstones. He immediately ran from the place, believing that the wealth will destroy him. On the way back he met two monks travelling with their attendant. He said, "Don't go that way, the evil which brings destruction is there," and went ahead. The two monks and their attendant instantly understood that they were going to come into great riches. They were walking on the way which leads to some great wealth.

The attendant wanted the wealth for himself, so he secretly mixed snake poison in the food of the monks. The monks also didn't want to share the riches with the attendant. At the first opportunity they got, they drowned him in the nearby river. After this, they both ate the poisoned food and themselves died. Thus as the first monk said, "wealth did destroy."

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Grade 6

Story 1 - Lord Mahaveer and the cowherder



Value: Forgiveness

"Nani," said Natasha, "tell us a story."

"Yes, Nani," said Moni "tell us a story."

"Let me tell you the story of Lord Mahavir and the cows," said Nani. "Once winter was around the corner. All creatures were afraid of the cold. Walking through the fields, Lord Mahaveer arrived at a tree outside a silent village. It was featherladen and filled with sleeping birds. He was soon immersed in deep meditation, feeling the way - the path of the Jinas. The conquest is inside Lord Mahaveer reflected, and then reflected further on reality. It was clear in his innersight, like a snakehood gem *nagamani*. In the act of seeing inside, he lost track of worldly reality. All was a shade of white. Lord Mahaveer was in deep concentration.

Soon there came a cowherd with his cows to the place Lord Mahaveer was meditating. This cowherd, an arrogant and swift man, wanted someone to look after

his cows for the a short time, having got some work to complete. The cowherder instructed Lord Mahaveer to look after his cows.

"But how can Lord Mahavir look after the cows," asked Moni, "was he not in deep meditation?"

"He was, its true Moni. He didn't hear the cowherder," said Nani. "But the cowherder thought that Lord Mahavir had accepted the request and he went happily to finish his chores."

"What happened to the cows when he left?" asked Natasha.

"Lord Mahaveer was not conscious of the cows. They were playful and extremely curious. They wandered off - into the pastures and beyond. They went with a skip in their heart and spring in their step. It was a walk of wonders for the cows. They wandered with happiness and joy. They were very delighted. They wandered and stayed everywhere. It was a feast of grass and adventure.

The cowherder came back in a few hours and found that the cows were missing. He was agitated and restless. He went in search of the cows with both hope and despair. His search was futile, he didn't find the cows. He was angry and red-eyed. He was filled with spurts of hot rage. His breathing was heavy. It was time for yelling at someone. And who better than the alleged culprit - Lord Mahaveer. He went to the place where Lord Mahaveer was meditating - in his heart filled with

floods tons of insulting abusive words; he thought Lord Mahaveer had stolen his the cows. He took got a rope to thrash Lord Mahaveer. The earth shook, the rivers trembled, the sky changed colors. It was a moment of silence, deep and frightening. It was a moment when life stopped. A deva from heaven manifested and stopped the cowherder

"You don't understand what you were going to do," said the Deva. "But he took my cows," protested the cowherder. "He is Lord Mahavir, a *tirthankara*, he didn't take your cows. He was infact deep in meditation and completely unaware of your cows. Your cows are standing next to him because they sense his deep spiritual energy and love for all beings."

The cowherder understood his mistake and apologized. After Lord Mahavir's meditation was over and he realised what had happened, he forgave the cowherder for his momentary rage. The cowherder's heart stopped and restarted. It became pure. He was a changed man. Inside he was like a flower now, a flower in bloom.

That was the change in him - sudden and wonderful. It was because of Lord Mahaveer that the cowherder was blessed. Forever, the cowherder was blessed.

"What a lovely story Nani," said Natasha.

"Yes Nani," said Moni

Story 2 - The story of Shantanu



Value: Keeping One's Word

"Nani, do narrate an unusual love story," said Moni.

"I will tell you a story from the Mahabharata," said Nani.

"Ye," said Natasha.

Shantanu was a wise and justice loving king," began Nani. "The subjects of Shantanu's kingdom were happy and wealthy. They all loved their king. One day, Shantanu was walking along the banks of the river Ganga when he saw an extremely beautiful maiden.

He immediately fell in love with her and asked her if she would marry him. She said, "I will marry you if you agree to my conditions. The first condition is that you should never enquire about my past. The second is that you should never question my actions whether they be good or evil. If you ever act against these conditions, I will leave you instantly."

"What did Shantanu do?" asked Moni.

"He agreed to the conditions," said Nani, "and made the mysterious woman the Queen of Hastinapur."

"What happened then Nani?" asked Moni.

"Time passed and the Queen of Hastinapur gave birth to a child," said Nani. "King Shantanu was exuberated, but only for a short time. At night, the King saw the Queen carry the newborn child to the River Ganges and much to his horror, throw the child in. The King was deeply saddened."

"Couldn't he question the Queen?" asked Natasha.

"He couldn't break his promise, so he kept quiet," said Nani.

"What happened next Nani?" asked Moni.

"For the next several years the Queen similarly gave birth to and threw in the river six more children, making a total of seven children that the King lost.

When it was time for the eighth son to be born, the King had a change of heart - he was determined to stop the Queen.

As soon as the Queen went to the river with the intention of throwing the baby in, the King spoke to her, "How can a mother do this to her own children?"

The Queen looked sadly at the King and said, "You have broken your promise, you have questioned me. I must leave you now."

"Don't go," said the King feebly. He loved the Queen very dearly.

"It is predestined for me to leave now," said the Queen, "listen to my story.."

"I am the goddess Ganga and these children are the eight Vasus. The Vasu Prabhasa had stolen Sage Vashistha's cow and his brothers had hidden the cow. In anger, Sage Vashistha cursed them to be born on earth as mortals. The seven Vasus who merely hid the cow were to be born on Earth only for a few hours. But Prabhasa who had actually stolen the cow was to live a long life on earth. The Vasus thus cursed pleaded with me, Ganga, that I myself bear their souls on earth as their mortal mother. I agreed."

"The seven children, whom I threw in the river, are the seven Vasus who have returned to heaven. This child, who is not destined to die early, is the Vasu Prabhasa."

"Now I must leave you," said the Goddess Ganga, "however, let me take your son with me as he is too young to be without a mother now. When he grows to be young man, educated in all the lore, I will bring him back to you."

"What happened then Nani?" asked Moni.

"The Goddess Ganga returned to the heavens taking the baby with her. King Shantanu, alone and sad, returned to his palace."

Story 3 - The ocean is churned



Value: Hardwork leads to prosperity

"Nani tell us another story," said Natasha.

"Sure," said Nani, "Durvasa, the sage created from a part of Siva, was wandering all over the earth when he came across a nymph holding a beautiful garland. He demanded the garland from her and wore it on his own person. As he progressed he saw Indra, the king of the Gods, seated on Airavata, his elephant, and being attended by the Devas. Durvasa threw the garland to Indra who suspended it on Airavata where it shone like the river Jahnavi, glittering on the dark summit of the mountain Kailasa. The elephant who was inebriated flung the garland on the earth. Durvasa was very angry with the treatment of his gift. He told Indra, "You have become intoxicated with pride Vasava and have disrespected the garland which was verily the dwelling place of Shri. As you have insulted me in this bitter manner, you will lose your dominion over the universe.

After this the three worlds and Indra lost their vigour. With the three worlds thus divested of prosperity and deprived of energy, the Danavas and the Daityas,

the enemies of the *Devas* raged a war against them. Overcome thus, Indra and the other Gods proceeded to Brahma for protection. Brahma advised, "Seek protection in **from** Lord Vishnu, the tamer of the demonic, the unconquerable Lord and the remover of grief in those who take refuge before **in** him." Brahma then with the other deities proceeded to the ocean for milk.

They prayed to Hari, 'May Hari be gracious to us. O Vishnu have pity on us and manifest before us.'

Hari, the creator of the universe, being thus prayed to by the divinities, smiled, and spoke, "Oh Gods, I will restore your strength. Act as I suggest. Let all the Gods, along with the *Asuras*, cast all sorts of medicinal herbs into the sea of milk. Next, making the mountain Mandara the churning-stick **rod** , the serpent Vasuki the rope, churn the ocean together for ambrosia."

Being thus instructed by Hari, the divinities entered into an alliance with the *Asuras*. They collected various kinds of medicinal herbs, and cast them into the sea of milk, the waters of which were radiant as the shining clouds of autumn.

The *Devas* took the mountain Mandara for the staff **pole** the serpent Vasuki for the rope and churned the ocean for Amrita. The assembled Gods headed by Vishnu were at the tail of the serpent and the Daityas and Danavas at its head and neck.

Scorched by the flames emitted from the serpent's hood, the demons were shorn of their glory. The clouds driven towards his tail by the breath of Vasuki's mouth refreshed the Gods with revivifying showers. In the midst of the milky sea, Hari himself, in the form of a tortoise, served as a pivot **support** for the mountain.

With one portion of his energy, Vishnu, unseen by Gods or demons, sustained the serpent king; and with another, infused vigour into the Gods.

From the ocean, thus churned by the Gods and Danavas, first rose the cow Surabhi, the fountain of milk and curd. Then, appeared the goddess Varuni, the goddess of wine, her eyes rolling with intoxication. Next, from the swirl of the deep, sprang the divine Parijata tree perfuming **spreading perfume** in the world with its blossoms. The cool-rayed moon next rose, and was claimed ~~for~~ by Shiva.

Then came poison created from the sea, of which the snake gods (Nagas) took possession. Dhanwantari, resplendent in white, and bearing in his hand the cup of Amrita, next came forth. Then, seated on a full-blown lotus, and holding a water-lily in her hand, the goddess Sri, radiant with beauty, rose from the waves. The great sages, enraptured, hymned her with the song dedicated to her praise. Ganga and other holy streams served her. The elephants of the skies, filling pure waters in vases of gold, poured them over the goddess, the queen of the universal world. The sea of milk presented her with a wreath of never-fading flowers and the

architect of the gods decorated her with heavenly ornaments. Thus bathed, attired, and adorned, the goddess set herself upon the chest of Hari and there reclining, turned her eyes upon the *Devas*.

Angered by this, the powerful Daityas forcibly seized the Amritacup, that was in the hand of Dhanwantari. Vishnu, assuming a female form, fascinated and deluded them; and recovered the Amrita for the *Devas*. Sakra and the other *Devas* drank the Amrita. The enraged demons, grasping their weapons, fell upon them; but the Gods, in whom the ambrosial drink had infused fresh vigour, defeated them. The gods then greatly rejoiced, paid homage to Vishnu, and resumed their reign in heaven. The sun shone with renovated **renewed** splendour, and again discharged his appointed task; and the celestial luminaries again circled in their respective orbits. Fire once more blazed fiercely, beautiful in splendour and the minds of all beings were animated with devotion. The three worlds again were rendered happy by prosperity and Indra, the chief of the Gods, was restored to power." "This was the story of the churning of the ocean," said Nani.

Story 4 - The story of Arjuna and Hanuman



Value - Humility

"Nani, tell us a story about the monkey god," said Moni.

"Arjuna, was the bravest of the Pandava Brothers and also the most skilled," began Nani, "and his one great skill lay in archery. Just like Rama of the previous era.

Once before the great Kurukshetra war, Arjuna was travelling. And in his travels he arrived at the famed Rameshwaram, where Rama had built a linga for the worship of Shiva, before his war with the demon Ravana.

This was also the place from which Rama and the monkey army of Sugreev had built a bridge to Lanka. As Arjuna stood at this spot, he wondered out loud, "But why did Rama need help from an army of monkeys to build a stone bridge to Lanka? Why could a fabled archer like him not just easily built the bridge with arrows?"

An old monkey suddenly appeared on the spot and answered Arjuna's question, "No bridge of arrows can withstand the weight of the great monkeys - Sugreev, Angad, Nal, Neel, Hanuman and others. Why it won't stand the weight of a tiny monkey like me."

"I can't believe that," said Arjuna. "I can easily build a bridge to Lanka that will stand your weight. And I will do it only with arrows."

"Bet," said the old monkey.

"Bet," said Arjuna.

So, Arjuna built a bridge of arrows to Lanka. But no sooner had the old monkey stepped on it that it broke. This happened twice. The old monkey laughed. And Arjuna was confused and defeated.

Just then, a shining young lad arrived at that the spot. "You seem to have an argument, perhaps I can help resolve it," he said.

Arjuna said, "I am trying to build a bridge with arrows that can withstand this monkey's weight. But that is not to be."

"Prove it in front of me," said the young boy, "I am sure the bridge will stand."

So Arjuna once again built the bridge of arrows. The old monkeys leapt on it, confident that it will break again. But this time it didn't crumble.

The monkey became angry and jumped on it. Still the bridge stood.

"Let me take the form in which I crossed Lanka," said the monkey who was none other than Rama's devotee Hanuman.

Hanuman took his huge magical and yet the bridge stood still. Arjuna recognised Hanuman and bowed before him. But Hanuman was confused. He looked down and saw that a turtle was holding up the bridge. He looked at the young boy and realised that it was none other than Krishna.

"Krishna," bowed Hanuman.

"O Krishna," squealed Arjuna in delight, thrilled to see his friend.

"That was a lesson in humility," said Krishna.

"I will repent," said Hanuman, "by standing by Arjuna's chariot during the Kurukshetra war to make sure his chariot doesn't sink in the ground." Thus, Arjuna and Hanuman became friends as Krishna blessed them.

And during the great war, Arjuna's chariot had Hanuman in his banner. Eventually, Arjuna and his brothers went on to win the war."

"Thanks Nani," said Natasha.

Story 5 - The story of Nirnamika



Value - Non injury

"Nani, tell us a story," said Natasha and Moni.

"Listen to the story of Nirnamika," said Nani.

"In the continent of Dhatakikhanda, in the east Vindhya in the village there was a poor man called Nagil. Every night he would go to bed hungry and thirsty. He had a poor wife Nagasri and six daughters. In time his wife was ready to give birth to another child. Hearing this news Nagil ran away. On hearing this sorrowful news Nagasri didn't name the newest girl who was born to her. People called the child Nirnamika. As Nirnamika grew up, she sustained herself by doing menial tasks in the houses in the village.

"I want some sweets," Nirnamika asked her mother once. And her mother responded, "If you want sweets, take a rope and go the mountain Ambaratilaka for a load of wood." Nirnamika did just that.

At that time omniscience had come to Muni Yugandhara who was seated on the same mountain. A festival was being celebrated in his honour by the Gods. People

from all over came to honour the Muni. Nirnamika too threw her load of wood and went up the mountain to revere the Muni.

The Muni delivered a sermon, "The pain of existence is terrible."

Nirnamika folded her hands and said, "You mentioned that samsara is sorrowful for everyone. I thought only I was deeply afflicted."

"What pain is there of yours, that is not shared by other living beings?" asked the Muni and he went on to describe the different kinds of suffering on earth and in hell. "In this ocean of worldly existence," said he "there is no limit to pain, like there is no limit to sea monsters in the ocean. In this world the dharma of the Jinas is the only remedy. Never to do these things -

1. Never injure any being
2. Never engage in falsehood
3. Never take an object which has not been given
4. Never acquire possessions

If you follow this path, you will acquire greater and greater happiness."

Nirnamika acquired a desire for emancipation and under the **tutelage of the** muni she learnt the lay duties as taught by the Jinas. From that time onwards she

practiced penances of various types. In the end, she was reborn as a goddess in heaven.

Story 6 -The story of the merchant Dhana



Value- Charity

"Nani tell us a Jain story," said Moni and Natasha.

"The first incarnation of the first Tirthankara Rishabhaswami was as the merchant Dhana," said Nani. The merchant Dhana was born in the large city Ksitipratisthita.

In this large city, ruled the dharmic and magnificent king Prasannacandra. The richest man of the city was Dhana.

"Nani, how rich was Dhana?" asked Moni.

"In Dhana's house jewels were piled as if they were grain and divine garments were strewn around as if they were sacks. Dhana's house with horses, mules and camels looked like the ocean with its sea animals," said Nani. "Apart from being wealthy, Dhana was also endowed with noble character. He was generous, earnest and good. One day, Dhana wished to go to the city of Vasantapura with many goods. He had an announcement made among the people of Ksitipratisthita, "I am going to Vasantapura. Those who wish to join me may do so. I will give goods to those without goods, provisions to those without provisions. If you chose to travel with me I will

protect you from robbers and wild animals. I will care for you as a relative." He climbed a chariot and worked outside the city. Many people assembled there to leave for Vasantapura.

Just then, the Acharya Dharmaghosha approached Dhana with a following of sadhus. "I wish to go to Vasantapura in your caravan," said he. "This will be my pleasure," said Dhana.

The people of Ksitipratisthita, the sadhus and Dhana all set out on the journey. The merchandise was carried by camels, buffaloes, fine oxen, mules and donkeys. The mules walked like deer and their steps could not be seen because of their speed. Dust rose on all sides. First came the fiery summer and everyone was constantly thirsty. The travelers reduced the heat with fans made of *palasa*, palmyra, lotus, date palm and plantain.

The season changed to monsoon. The cloud in the sky looked like a demon holding a bow and discharging arrows that turned into the rain. The continuous lightening frightened the travelers. They proceeded very slowly due to the water and mud on the path. The animals will slip in the water every now and then. Seeing all this Dhana stopped the party and made a camp in the forest. People made thatched huts to pass the rainy season. Acharya Dharmaghosa and his sadhus settled in hut built on a ground free of wildlife living beings. The travelers ate bulbs and roots

from the forest because the food they were carrying had run dry. Dhana was appraised of this situation. At night Dhana thought about Acharya Dharmaghosa, "What will the muni eat since he does not touch bulbs and roots?" "How can I show him my face.." "Nevertheless I must see him."

When it was dawn, Dhana and the main travelers went to meet the Acharya in his hut. Muni Dharmaghosa looked to Dhana like the churning stick of the ocean, as a road to liberation, as an abode of Dharma and as a wish-fulfilling tree. Dhana saw that the munis there were engaged in meditation, absorbed in silence, engaged in kayotsarga, reading scriptures and discoursing on dharma. Dhana paid homage to the Acharya and sadhus in turn.

"I have been careless," said Dhana, "I have not personally cared for your welfare, nor asked after your wellbeing welfare. Please Forgive me."

Said the noble Muni Dharmaghosa, "We have been comfortable in your caravan."

"Please accept some food," said Dhana. He made an offer of fresh ghee to the Sadhu. "I accept," said the Muni and Dhana made the gift. As result of this act of charity the seed of enlightenment *Samyak Darshan* entered Dhana.

Later that night he went into the Muni's hut and said, "instruct me."

The muni gave a discourse on dharma and at a suitable time they all left for the city of Vasantapura where Dhana sold his goods. Once his work was done Dhana returned to the city of Ksitipratisthita. And that is the story of Dhana," said Nani.

"Thank you Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 7 -The meeting with Bala



Value - Practice

"Nani, why do I have to work so hard for my exams?" asked Moni.

"Because hardwork pays. In this context, listen to this story -

In the south of India, is the famed Malaya mountain whose lofty peaks are renowned for obscuring the sun. It is said, that the Malaya mountain, resembling the Virat Purusha of the Vedas in splendor, is said to despise the renowned Mount Meru. The shoots of plants in the Malaya mountain are redder than the crimson sun. The whole mountain is filled with the rich aroma of sandalwood. To top this, the renowned breeze carries with it the fragrance of cardamom plants. One can hear the melodious music of both swarms of bees and of divine celestial maidens. The ponds on the mountain are filled with fully blossoming lotuses and playful swans. The vegetation on the mountain is trampled by herds of proud elephants that rival the arrogance of rain bearing clouds. On top of the Malaya mountain are families of lions, tigers and wild boars. Below, on the mountain are rows of neat hermitages reverberating with the sounds of the Vedic chants.

In one of the huts, made of leaves and grass, was seated Parasurama, the son of the seer Jamadagni. His skin was fair, the colour of camphor and he was smeared with Vibhuti, sacred ash. The triple lines of Vibhuti shone on his forehead. He emitted a calm aura, created by the completion of numerous religious rites. He, an avatar of Vishnu and a renowned devotee of Siva, was a source of bliss to all living beings. Parasurama had attained self-knowledge through the grace of his guru Dattatreya.

Sumedha, one among the dear disciples of Parasurama, just then approached his guru with folded arms, "O ocean of compassion, protector of devotees, Parasurama, I once asked you for the secret knowledge that grants all merit and well-being, while removing the affliction of those suffering. You told me that you will answer me in the course of time. Since then, sixteen years have passed and I beseech you to now narrate this great secret to me."

Hearing this Parasurama remembered the secret of Lalitha, which was narrated to him by Dattatreya who himself heard it from Siva. "My son," he said, "tomorrow, at the auspicious period of the Pusya star, I will reveal to you a great secret."

Early next morning, after performing the morning rites, Sumedha prostrated himself before his guru Parasurama, offered fragrant flowers to the murti of

Lalitha, who is also known as Bala, Tripura and Kumari. He then taught Sumedha the mantra through which the goddess can be invoked. Parashurama taught his disciple all the secrets of worshipping the goddess and how to invoke the grace of the goddess. Sumedha was initiated into Sri Vidya - the auspicious wisdom of the goddess Lalitha. He left Sumedha with the instruction, "Now practice Sri Vidya."

After saluting his guru, Sumedha left for Srisailem, the permanent abode of the Goddess Brahmari. He constructed a clean hut with twigs and commenced the practice of Sri Vidya. For almost one and a half years he continued with the austerities, eating only fruit during this period. Then one night, he saw the goddess Bala in his dreams.

Bala had assumed the form of a ten year old playful girl, who had red limbs like the rising sun. She was holding a Japamala and book, and two of her other hands bore signs of assurance and abundance. Bala had three beautiful eyes and was wearing a crown studded with the crescent moon.

Bala was one of the greatest goddesses in the cosmos and even Vishnu, Shiva and the Devas were unable to comprehend or explain her splendour. Anything was possible for those devotees who had surrendered at Bala's lotus feet. Before creation, she alone in the form of supreme consciousness filled all that existed. She alone bore the seed to the garland of the groups of universes that would

constitute the cosmos. Because of this all beings are related to Bala, as waves are to the sea. There is nothing in the universe that is different from Bala. She exists as the soul of all living beings. Bala's feet are sufficient to drive out all delusion.

Sumedha was thrilled to see Bala and he praised her with a spontaneously composed hymn. Tears of joy, filled his face. Bala spoke in a nectarine voice, "O Child," and placed her lotus-like hand on Sumedha's head, "you have attained perfection, return to your Guru." Saying this Bala disappeared.

Next morning, Sumedha was confused. He dismissed what he had seen as an illusion. "There is no point in returning to my Guru," he mused. Just then he heard a voice from the sky, "What you saw was the truth, follow the Devi's instructions."

Thus, Sumedha was able to see Bala due to prolonged practice austerities," said Nani.

Story 8 - The generosity of the Goddess Ambika



Value - Generosity

"Nani, tell us the story of a Jain goddess," said Moni.

"Yes, nani," said Natasha.

"In the region of Saurashtra," began Nani, "there was a city filled with gold and gemstones called Kodinagra. In this city lived a wealthy priest called Soma, who was meticulous in his service to the gods and who had immaculate knowledge of the Vedas. His wife Ambini who was always bedecked with the most beautiful of jewels was renowned for the purity of her behavior. They had two sons - Siddha and Buddha. They lived with Soma's mother.

Now once a ceremony had to be performed on behalf of the ancestors and many priests were invited for the ritual meal. Ambini made many types of food for the occasion - rice and dal dishes, varied spiced delicacies and sweet milk pudding.

Now at the precise moment when Soma's mother went to take bath a Jain monk came to their house asking for alms so that he may break his month-long fast that has been month long. Ambini was very happy she got a chance to serve the

monk. Filled with piety and devotion, Ambini offered a portion of the food she had made. The monk accepted the alms with gratitude and left.

Soma's mother returned from her bath to find a portion of the food missing.

Ambini told Soma's mother about how she had served the Jain monk. Soma's mother became furious, "What have you done? You should have offered the food to the family deity and then served it to the invited priests. How dare you give away the food to a Jain monk." The enraged woman complained to Soma about Ambini. Soma, who was superstitious and old fashioned, threw Ambini out of the house along with her two sons.

Ambini carried Siddha and Buddha with her and left the city. Soon the children felt terribly thirsty and started crying. Ambini was very upset. Just then a dried up lake filled up with fresh water because of Ambini's pure nature. She gave the children cool water to drink. Next, the children started feeling hungry and started crying. A dried up dead mango tree on their way burst into ripe fruit. Ambini gave the children juicy mangoes to eat and they were satisfied.

Meanwhile a guiding Goddess of the Jain religion took pity on Ambini and restored the food she had given to the monk. Soma's mother saw that the food had

been restored. She told Soma, "Son, your wife Ambini will bring us good luck, bring her home." Soma left to find his wife.

When Ambini saw Soma coming towards her she was terrified. She internally meditated on the Jinas, the Jain *tirthankaras*, and threw herself into a well. She was reborn as the powerful goddess Ambika in the heaven known as Kohanda. For this reason she is also known as Kohandi. This is the story of the Goddess Ambika - how one generous act turned a woman into a goddess."

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Grade 7

Story 1 - The Valour of Durga



Value - valour

"Nani, who is the bravest Indian Goddess?" asked Moni.

"Why that would have to be Durga," said Nani.

"Nani, Nani please tell us the story of Durga," said Moni.

"Durga," Nani began, "means the inaccessible one. Also in a former kalpa, space time continuum, she had killed a demon called Durgama and hence she came to be known as Durga."

"Nani, what did Durga do during this *kalpa*?" asked Natasha.

"In this kalpa the task given to Durga was to end the demon Mahishasur. For this purpose the Gods assembled on Mount Meru and fused their light and energy together. The result was Durga. Hence Durga is the sum total of all the gods' effulgence and power," said Nani.

"Who was Mahishasur?" asked Moni.

"Of the demons that ever lived he was the worst. Greedier than the greediest. Angrier than the angriest. Prouder than the proudest. He was also the most violent demon that ever walked the earth. He had got a boon of immortality from Brahman, the creator god, according to which no one except a woman could kill him. He, powered by this boon, conquered the heavens and displaced Indra and **the** Devas. The devas who were terrified of him fled in all directions seeking succour. Mahishasur was particularly terrifying because he was part demon, part buffalo," said Nani.

"Cool," squealed Moni and Natasha, "who loved true-to-life monsters."

"Do you know that buffaloes are the vehicle of the God of Death - Yama. And verily like the God of Death was Mahishasur to his foes. Mahishasur disrupted yagnas, tormented the sages and the lay people. Everyone was fed up of him," said Nani.

"Nani, now tell us something about Durga," said Natasha.

"Durga is Adi Shakti's favourite child. She is insolent as she is wild. And she is wild quite literally in her Vana Durga form. Of the three gunas of Prakriti, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, Durga is Rajas because she rules. She represents wealth and prosperity that is righteous. She remains even handed in the game of kill-the-asuras.

In this world, there are two paths - one dark and one light. Each leads to its opposite end. The dark path to the world of sunlight and the light path to the world of darkness. Durga is the darkness of the dark world. And the light of the sunworld, both extremes. In darkness there exists space, the sunyata of all existence. In the light world there exists the sunpower that gives life to all beings. Light and darkness are not enemies in this sense.

But the darkness of the asuras, of Mahishasur is the darkness of violence and ignorance. It never goes away, unless Gods divinities like Durga intervene. And it never does any good.

It is victory Durga seeks. Victory over the asuras. Victory over Mahishasur.

Durga laughed loudly, a garrulous laugher, challenging Mahishasur.

Durga's roar was so terrible that the mountains quivered and the oceans overflowed. "Victory to the lion-riding Goddess," cheered the gods," said Nani.

"Nani, how did Durga kill Mahishasur?" asked the girls.

"Intrigued by the sound of Durga's laughter, Mahishasur stepped out to see who was challenging him.

Their battle began. With the Asuras, Durga was wild and formidable. Made of light itself, her luster lit up the triple worlds. The earth sank as she moved on

her lion and the netherworlds quivered with the sound of her bow. With a thousand arms, Durga permeated the directions.

Mahishasur was enraged with what had happened. He transformed into a buffalo and started terrorizing the attendants of Durga. He twirled them around and threw them with great force. He killed them all - striking them with his snout, his hoofs, his tail, and his horns. Mahishasur, the personification of rage, roared loudly. He picked mountains with his horns and started throwing them at Durga. The Earth cracked due to his heavy hoofs and lashes of his tail sent the ocean in disarray. His raging breath was tearing apart the heavens. Mahishasur fought with rage in his belly. His demonic head quivered with jubilation.

Durga was enraged with what had happened. She threw a snare on Mahishasur and bound him in it. Mahishasur abandoned the buffalo form and took the shape of a lion. As Durga drew close to chop his head, he changed into a man holding a sword. Durga fought Mahishasur with great wrath. And why not? Was he not the demon had traumatized the universe? As Durga tried to pierce him with a sharp weapon, Mahishasur changed once more and this time into an elephant. Now Mahishasur attacked the lion. But Durga stopped him and tried to cut him again. Once more, Mahishasur changed, this time back to his half-man, half buffalo body.

Durga for her part stopped in midst of the battle and quaffed the divine drink given to her by Kubera. Her eyes reddened, she smiled. The time had come to slay Mahishasur. Durga caught hold of the buffalo-demon's horns, crushed him under his feet, pinned him to the ground with the trident given to her by Shiva and used her scimitar to behead him. The gods were delighted. Mahishasur was finally slain and Durga's valour had done it," said Nani.

"Thank you," said the girls.

Story 2 - The brilliance of Lalitha



Value: Brilliance and Intelligence

"Nani," said the Moni and Natasha, "tell us the story of a goddess who is as excellent as Durga."

"Let me tell you the story of Lalitha Tripura Sundari, the slayer of Bandasur," said Nani.

"Yes Nani," squealed the girls who loved goddesses who slew demons.

"Tell us something about this goddess," asked Moni.

"Lalitha is the goddess of spontaneous play," started Nani. "She is also called Tripura, because she is triple in everything.

Lalitha is the sweetness of flowers. The freshness of the rose, the pristinity of the lotus, the fragrance of the jasmine. Her great secret is that this world is in perpetual bloom because of her. Once there was a great demon called Bhandasur, who was a great threat to the three worlds. Lalitha is the one who ended his reign.

This story is from long back when Shiva had lost his wife Sati and was immersed in severe great meditation. Just then, Kamadeva, the God of love disturbed him by shooting flowery arrows around him. Lord Shiva opened his third eye in rage, and sent out shooting flames at Kamadeva. Out of the ashes of the God, Ganesha, shaped a doll. The doll turned into demon Bhandasur. The demon gained a boon from the gods that he would rule the worlds for 60000 years. And so, he did. During this time the world lost all *rasa* (sense of enjoyment). And there was no joy left in any living beings. So the devas did an yagna and evoked Adishakti - the primordial power.

Lalitha arose out of that yagna and promised to kill Bhandasur. 64,000 shaktis arose from her body. She, then, created the Sri Cakra - the flowering yantra that lights up the world.

Lalitha along with her minister Matangi and army commander Varahi burst into Bhandasur's infamous city called Sunyata (void). Here she and her shaktis killed the demon and his hoard. They returned *rasa* or relish to the universe. Near Meru, is a city of gemstones called Sripura. This is where Lalitha resides.

Lalitha says that *rasa* or relish is needed for the running of the universe. And without *rasa* all living beings will go mad and die of depression. It is this *rasa* or delight that she creates in this world through flowers and the Sri Cakra."

"Nani, how does **did** Lalitha kill Bandasur ?" asked Moni.

"Lalitha as a goddess is simply innovative and brilliant. She does many things that eventually annihilated Bandasur along with his army. She uses the tips of her fingernails to recreate the ten avatars of Vishnu - Matsya, Kurma, Vamana, Varaha, Narasimha, Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Balaram, Kalki.

Bandasur too is was a difficult opponent to face. He recreated all the major infamous asuras.

He brings Mahishasur back to life. Lalitha creates Durga who slays the renewed Mahishasur. Bandasur brings Ravana back to life. Lalita recreates Rama instantly. In this manner for each asura brought back to life by Bandasur, Lalitha recreates the corresponding Gods who can slay them.

Bandasur throws some major obstacles on the way and creates an obstacle maker machine," said Nani.

"What does Lalitha do then?" asks Natasha.

"Lalitha creates Lord Ganapathy from her imagination and he, her son, removes all obstacles," says Nani.

"How do Lalitha's shakti's help her?"

"Matangi, the goddess of the poor and the minister of Lalitha annihilates Vishanga. Varahi kills Vishukra. And Lalitha's daughter Bala kills Bandasur's sons.

Pratyangira is the Goddess of logical reasoning. Thousand headed and riding a chariot of lions (representing the 4 vedas) she represents the power of intelligence.

"Nani, why is Lalitha so brilliant?" asked Moni.

" Moni, goddesses come in two formats - shanta (peaceful) and urga (frightening).

Lalitha is a completely shanta goddess to whom even the wrathful goddesses bow down to. As a result of this Lalitha is very powerful. She uses this power for the good of the words. And herein lies her ingenuity and brilliance."

"Thanks Nani," said the girls.

Story 3 - The intelligence of Kali



Value: Intelligence

'Nani, tell us the story of Kali, begged the girls.

"Kali's power transcends time. Kali is the power of immortality that the asuras so desire. Mahakala is Shiva in the form of time. And as Kali dances on top of him, she is known as Mahakali.

Kali is dark in colour. Thus too, she is known as Kali. Destruction is **was** the seed from which Kali was born. Destruction is Kali and Kali is destruction.

Kali travels with the picasas and dance with the jackals. Unless she feels the howl of the jackals and the cackling of vultures in cremation grounds she is not happy.

The death and destruction of asuras is Kali's divine sport.

Kali dances mirthfully. Her garland of skulls shining exquisitely by the moonlight. The skulls clang and bang. Suddenly there is an explosion and Kali splits her body into ten forms - Adi Kali, Tara, Sodasi, Bhuvaneshwari, Bhairavi, Bagalamukhi, Dhumavathi, Chinnamastika, Matangi and Kamala - the dasa mahavidyas - the ten wise women."

"Tell is a story about the intelligence of Kali," asked Moni.

"It is Kali Mahamaya who put Vishnu into a great slumber. Once Brahma, the creator god was greatly troubled by two demons called Madhu and Kaitabh who came out of the sleeping Vishnu's ear wax.

It was imperative that the sleeping Vishnu be woken up. So Brahma appealed to Kali and requested that Kali leaves Vishnu such that he may return to the waking state.

Kali did as Brahma wished and left Vishnu. He began to yawn and got up. Vishnu noticed that Brahma was looking rather terrified and he asked for the cause.

'These demons - Madhu and Kaithab are threatening my life,' said Brahma.

Vishnu saw the two demons and challenged them to a fight. They fought for a long time but to know no avail. Vishnu was not able to kill them, either.

Vishnu then worshipped Kali and asked for her assistance. I deluded the minds of Madhu and Kaitabh such that they said to Vishnu, 'We are pleased with you, ask any boon of us,'

Then, Vishnu said, 'Grant me the boon that I kill you,'

And so they did. Thus the intelligence of Kali saved the day."

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

"It is Kali who takes the form of Sita Kali and kills the thousand headed Sahasraravan," said Nani.

"Tell us this story," asked Moni and Natasha.

"After Rama and Sita Kali returned from Lanka (Rama having killed the 10 headed Lankesh) to India, they heard of the thousand headed Ravana, the mighty Sahasraravan, who was terrorising the people and the sages. Rama and Sita Kali set off to fight him."

"And Sri Rama killed him?" asked Moni.

"No Moni, not quite," said Nani. "Rama fought bravely with Sahasraravan but one of the rakshasa's weapons wounded Rama. He fell down on the battlefield unconscious. The asuras and rakshasas mocked while the devas grew pale with worry.

The news changed Sita from the benevolent Janaki, the daughter of the sage-king Janak to the furious Sita-Kali. Her complexion darkened. Her tongue fell out in classic Kali style. Her body shrunk and she was just flesh and bones. She was wearing a garland of freshly cut skulls with blood dripping from them. Her eyes were red and furious. She shrieked and a 1000 *ugra shaktis* came out of from her body. They were all matrikas, fierce mother goddesses. They all ran to the battlefield and started playing football with Sahasraravan's head. He died in blood and gore. So did his evil asura and rakshasa friends. Thus, in this form Sita Kali performed many brave and wondrous deeds."

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 4 - How Putraka overcame difficulties



Value: Good overcomes evil.

"Nani could you tell us a story of how good overcomes evil," asked Moni.

"I will tell you the story of Putraka and how he overcame great evil" said Nani.

"Putraka's father and his brothers were evil mindedness. When they found out about Putraka's prosperity they conspired to have him slain in a Durga temple as an offering to the goddess.

Putraka was instructed to go to the selfsame Durga temple by his ill-wishers. Innocently he did so and he found assassins positioned at the sanctum sanctorum.

"Why do you want to kill me?" Putraka asked.

"We don't; your father and uncles do. We are just hired hands," the to-be-Putraka-murderers said.

The goddess Durga, who was none other than Putraka's well-wisher, heard this conversation and mesmerised the assassins. Then Putraka bribed the men with a golden trinket he was wearing and they spared him. The men lied to Putraka's

father and uncles about the death of the boy and Putraka himself fled to a distant land. In time, the father and uncles were themselves slain while trying to usurp Putraka's possessions.

The disguised Putraka meanwhile returned to the woods of the Vindhya, wandering through the flower-lit forests he came to a yellow-orange open field where two heroes were engaged in combat. They stopped their wrestling to talk to him.

"We are the sons of the asura Maya and we are fighting amongst each other for three of his magical possessions - a vessel, a pair of shoes and a stick. "These are all fantastic," they said proudly. "The shoes give the power of flying through air, whatever you write on the staff turns true and the vessel is always overflowing with fresh, cooked food."

To them the clever Putraka answered, "Why do you think wrestling will help you? Run from this point and let the gifts go to the one who goes the furthest. I will keep them for you till the winner is decided." The fools agreed to this and ran from there. Putraka put on the magical shoes and carried in his hands the staff and the vessel. He then flew away to a new destination.

Putraka landed in a city called Akarsika and said to himself, "Whom do I trust? In whose house do I stay?" Wandering across the city he came across a

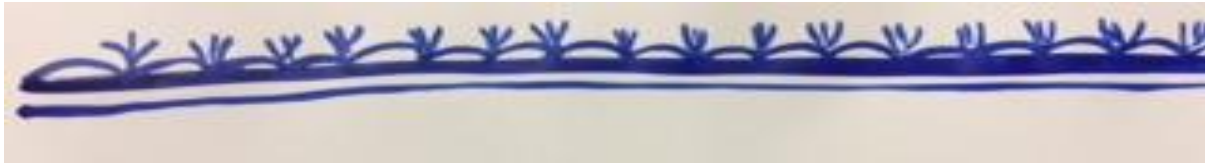
respectable elderly lady who welcomed him into her hut. He stayed on there peacefully.

One day the old lady said, "Son, why don't you get married? The king of this city has a noble-minded daughter called Patali, why don't you court her?"

The God of Love, Kama shot his arrows; Putraka put on his magic slippers and flew into the castle. There, the doe-eyed Patali beheld the lotus eyed Putraka for the first time. They married a Gandharva wedding ritual. Soon, the King found out that there was someone in the top story where the princess lived.

Before the soldiers could break the door, Patali and Putraka flew away with the magical objects. They landed on a vast empty patch by the Ganges. Here, Putraka fed Patali rice cakes from the vessel such that she was refreshed. To please her, he drew a city from his magical staff which then came to life. This city Putraka ruled wisely. It was named Pataliputra after the two of them and home to both the Goddess Laksmi and Saraswathi. It was in this Pataliputra that Vararuchi's teacher Varsha lived. In this manner Putraka overcame various problems and evils that life put his way through sheer goodness and intelligence."

Story 5 - The story of Panani's perseverance



Value - Perseverance

"Nani, how do we do well in our exams," asked Natasha.

"Persevere, persevere, persevere," said Nani, "and in this context hear this story.

"Pushpadanta, an attendant of Shiva, was born in the city of Kausambi to a priest called Somadatta and a hermit's daughter called Vasudatta. He was called Vararuci. She found herself in human form as a consequence of a curse just like her son Vararuci. So, they say, the gods, birth as a mortal is an elephant bitten curse for life as a mortal is uncertain and purple-perilous. Somadatta, Vararuchi's father had died when the boy was yet a toddler toddling around and he was raised by his severely-grieving mother.

Those were the days when Bharatvarsha prided itself on atitidevobhavo and people would entertain full hearted hospitality to unknown travellers - roadstone weary from long journeys. Following the custom, in Vararuci's house were staying two priests resting from their travels.

Just then, was heard a loud thundering noise from outside.

"Don't fear, Mother," said the swift Vararuci, "it is just a drama being performed."

"Is it your father's friend Bhavanada," said the mother tears drop-dripping through her eyeframes.

"Yes, ma," said Vararuci, "if you give me permission I will attend the program and recite the speeches word -for-word to you."

The Vedic way is an oral one, created by people remembering the ancient words by-heart and passing them intact to their successors. But by the time of our narration, orality lost its grasp and was rather a rarity.

So, the two guests were surprised that the boy could remember and recite what he had just heard. They tested him with ancient text and he passed their scrutiny. "Remarkable, remarkable," they said.

The two travellers, introduced themselves as Indradatta and Vyadi from the city of Vetasa. They wished to acquire great learning and worshipped the God Kartikeya to this end. The God was pleased with them and appeared in a flash-dream.

"Go," the boy-god of the Vale ordered, "to the city of Pataliputra, the capital of King Nanda and search out there a scholar named Varsha. He will teach you that which you wish to learn."

Scholar to a god but a blockhead to many mortals, Varsha was reviled in Pataliputra. But Indradatta and Vyadi trusted only the word of the child god Kartikeya. They finally found Varsha living in a part-eatenbyinsects accommodation. He was poor beyond belief and unmindfully engaged in deep austerities. His emaciated wife said, "Once after doing something stupid, and receiving a scolding from me, my husband Varsha undertook austerities to please the God Kartikeya. The god soon appeared and blessed Varsha with complete knowledge of all sciences and arts.

"These you can recount to someone who will never forget a word of them," said Kartikeya.

Indradatta and Vyadi though desirous of learning from Varsha could not recite the texts backwards forth. So, they went on a long journey to search for someone who could. In this manner, they met Vararuci who could remember and recite everything he heard.

Vasudatta, the boy Varuruchi's mother, was overwhelmed on hearing of Varsha from the two travellers. For when he had been born a divine oracle had

pronounced, "This boy will acquire the knowledge of the Vedas from Varsha and will make the science of grammar famous in the world."

So, mother and son parted and Vararuci went with Indradatta and Vyadi to the fabled city of Pataliputra. Here, they met Varsha who was delighted to see them. He recited the vedas and Vararuci learnt them all at one listening. With encouragement from Varsha even Vyadi and Indradatta understood the texts. The sound of Vedic recitation changed the very clime of Pataliputra and the people changed their view of Varsha and begged forgiveness. The reigning King Nanda showered Varsha with gifts.

Vararuchi, who was the former Shiva gana (?)Pushapadanta, spent his childhood under Varsha's tutelage, mastering the various vedic and vedantic arts and sciences. When he grew up he was intelligent as he was articulate.

One day, he chanced upon a maiden with lotus-blue eyes and complexion like the crescent moon. She was Upakosha - his teacher's niece.

The Goddess of Wisdom, Saraswathi, who dwelt in his heart made herself manifest and instructed him to marry Upakosha. He informed Varsha of his desire and the match was made. They were living happily and life went on pleasantly until a new pupil appeared before Varsha.

This pupil, dull-eyed and slow-brained irritated Varsha and his fellow pupils. Nothing, absolutely nothing would be understood by him. Finally, in frustration, Varsha cast Panini out. Panini went to the snow peaked Himalayas and engaged in severe austerities to please the Lord of the Pinaka bow, Shiva Pinaki. Panini did all sorts of things to please Shiva. He walked barefoot in freezing snow. He stopped his breath for months on end. He hung upside from a tree. He stopped eating food altogether. The great God was satisfied with Panini and handed him a new grammar to spread on Earth.

Such is the fate of mortals. When humans are shunned and mocked at by fellow-mortals they are embraced and loved by the immortals. The same Panini who was castigated for not being able to learn anything became a custodian of a new grammar that would be used by all Sanskrit writers for all time.

It is strange how life moves in circles. Once Varsha was condemned for being a dullard and ridiculed by all till the proof of his eradication became known to all and the same happened to his pupil Panini.

Vararuchi who too had mocked Panini once followed his lead and went to the Himalayas to please the three eyed Lord and learn the new Paninian grammar perfectly from the source."

Story 6 - How Anansi brought stories to earth



Value: Ahimsa, nonviolence

"Nani, tell us an African folktale," pleaded Moni.

"Ok," said Nani.

"Anansi was a wise spider who lived with his wife Aso. Though life had given him every bliss possible he felt there was something terribly wrong with life on earth. He thought and thought about it.

"What is missing on earth, that I am so sad?" he asked Aso.

"Are the rains on time and aplenty? Is the harvest good and ripe? Is there food for all beings?" Aso asked.

"Aso, the rains are good and the harvest of rice and corn is also plenty, all beings have enough to eat. But the problem is something else. We are no stories on earth. We have no stories to keep us company. We have no stories to make us laugh and cry. We have no stories to offer us relish. We have no stories to help us dream.

We have no stories to teach us to care for others. We have no stories on Earth," said Anansi sadly.

"True, we eat well and rest well but we have nothing to think about here on earth," said Aso.

"I have an idea - I will go to father sky Nyame and see if he has any stories," said Anansi.

"How will you reach father sky?" queried Aso, "why don't you build a silken rope connecting the earth with the sky. You can then meet Nyame and ask him about the stories. I will help you make the rope."

So, they both spun together a beautiful silverfish rope made of spidersilk. The rope was firm and held well. It connected the earth to the sky. Anansi jumped on it and trotted all the way to the sky. Once he reached the sky he saw the grim looking Nyame.

"Sir," he enquired, "do you have a minute?"

"Who are you and how did you get here?" asked Nyame.

"I am Anansi, I come from the Akan lands," said Anansi, "I and my wife Aso spun a silken rope from the earth to the sky. I climbed the rope and came to see you."

"What is your purpose?" asked Nyame.

"I want to know if you have any stories? There are no stories on earth and this makes life very tedious," said Anansi.

"I have a giant box of stories but why should I give them to you?" said Nyame.

"You have a box full of stories? How lovely!!! I will do anything to take them back to earth for all living beings," said Anansi.

"Ok, but you must complete a task for me. You must convince the three most dangerous beings on earth to become compassionate and nonviolent towards other living beings. If you do so I will give you the box of stories," said Nyame.

Anansi nodded in agreement and said, "I will turn Onini the python, Osebo the leopard and Mmboro hornets into compassionate creatures."

Saying so, Anansi returned to the earth. He told Aso about the condition for getting the stories on earth. Anansi had a plan.

Anansi and Aso stood outside Onini the python's home and had a loud debate about whether Onini would be as long as a palm tree branch. Onini heard this debate and came out to resolve it as his ego was hurt.

"How do I find out if I am longer than the palm tree branch?" asked Onini.

"Let me tie you to the branch and then we will know," said clever Anansi.

So Onini agreed. Once he was tied up tight and breathless, Anansi laughed at him.

Realising the trick the frightened Onini said, "Let me out,"

"I will once you see this is how small creatures feel when you trap them and kill them. Promise never to hunt again and you are free," said Anansi.

Onini realised his error for good and apologised. Anansi let he out and he remains vegetarian till this day.

Similarly Anansi converted the Osebo leopard and Mmboro hornets to a life of nonviolence and compassion. Having done this Anansi went to the sky once more.

"Nyame, I have accomplished the task you set for me. Can I have the stories?" said Anasi.

Nyame pleased with him handed him the box of stories.

Anansi carefully brought the stories to earth and spread them among all living beings. The stories were all about mutual love and respect for all living beings."

"Cool," said Natasha.

Story 7 - The story of Haesik and Deasun



Value: Intelligence

"Children, I want to tell you a Korean folktale today," said Nani.

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

"Once upon a time in the forest there lived a tiger that had grown old and was slightly wounded. As a consequence of this he was not able to chase hunt water deer, his usual prey. He had turned into a man-eater and all the villagers who lived near the forest were afraid of him.

The trees hated him and the hare fled where he treaded. The problem was not just that he was wounded or old. The real problem was that he had started dabbling in the dark arts. He would use spells to lure people out into the open, in isolated thickets where he would just gobble people up.

One day, he lit a cauldron and threw all sorts of herbs into it.

He sang in a coarse voice, "Find me a meal - of delicious humans,

Find me meal

That can feel,

Two-legged

And tasty to taste.

Find me a meal

That can feel"

This spell did its work and entered the head of an old woman who felt the sudden need to leave her house and visit her city who lived in the city, crossing the forest along the way. She was the mother of the twins - Haesik and Deasun.

Her children suspected something was amiss and pleaded with her to stay."

"And did she listen to them and ignore the spell?" asked Moni.

"No dear, she was adamant," said Nani sadly.

"She prepared tasty rice cakes and divided them into two sets - one for her children to eat and one for her sister as a gift."

She kissed both her children on both cheeks and trotted off with her bamboo basket filled with rice cakes into the forest pathway.

Haesik and Deasun looked sadly at each other. But what can children do against stubborn parents?

The tiger knew his spell had worked and he waited patiently in the leave-laced forest for the old mother to arrive. He followed her for some length - all the time thinking about what a fine meal she would make.

Once they were a far distance from the village and there was no gun carrying human to be seen for miles, the tiger accosted the old lady.

She was terrified to see the brightly yellow and sunnily smiling animal - "No.." she cried out, "don't kill me I have rice cakes, warm and soft, which you can eat."

The tiger, who had only been planning to make a meal of the lady," was tempted with this offer. He ate the two rice cakes she tossed on the ground.

The old lady, glad to have made it with her limbs intact, walked on.

She was hardly gone a mile when the tiger leapt in front of her again. She again tossed two rice cakes in front of him and walked on. This time with greater fear. Infact she didn't walk, she ran. But alas, the tiger caught up with her again. "Give me all your rice cakes," the tiger demanded.

"Here," said the lady and threw the whole basket down and fled in terror.

After making a fine meal of the warm rice cakes the tiger, who decided he liked human food as much as he liked human flesh, rushed to the old lady.

She knew her end was near, closed her eyes and remembered the creator god. The tiger after making a fine meal of her licked his blood stained lips. Rice cakes and the old lady, the tiger remained unsatisfied. He now wanted a bite of her two small children.

He wrapped himself in the old lady's cloths and picked up her basket and ran to her house.

"Clang, Clang Clang," went the old doorknob.

Heasil and Deasun knew something was amiss but seeing their mother's handsleeves by the window, they opened the door.

The tiger rushed in and the children rushed out.

They ran out and climbed a tree. The tiger ran after them and circled the tree.

Heasil and Deasun were intelligent and they started praying to the creator god and asked for a rope. Just then a rope dropped down from heaven. They clung to the rope and started climbing heavenwards.

The tiger saw this and prayed to the creator god for his own rope. Again, a rope dropped down. The tiger started climbing it.

Just then the rope was cut. The tiger dropped down and fell to his death.

Meanwhile Heasil and Deasun reached the heavens and became the sun and moon in the sky. They thus used their intelligence to outwit the tiger."

Story 8 - The dreamtime serpent



Value: Sustainable living

"Nani, tell us a creation myth," said Moni.

"I will narrate to you an aboriginal creation myth," said Nani.

"Dreamtime was the time before time. It was the time before knowledge. During dreamtime nothing would stir on earth. All was vast and empty. The earth was flat and devoid of all signs of life - plants, trees, animals, birds and humans. Nothing was there.

There were no landforms on earth that could sustain life. There were no lakes, rivers, hills, valleys and mountains. All was quiet. All was still. All was waiting for the rainbow serpent to wake up.

The rainbow serpent was a long and giant multihued serpent that dwelt under the surface of the earth. For eons, she remained under the surface of the earth, sleeping. For eons, she did not stir. For eons, she dreamt of the vast void beyond the void in her deep slumber. For eons, she did not stir. For eons, she remained eyes-shut and smiling. For eons, she rested under the surface of the earth.

Then one day, the rainbow serpent felt a remarkable stirring within her. She longed for life. She longed for existence. She slid up to the surface of the earth. There she kept sliding. With each moment and movement she kept creating new and wonderous landforms on earth. Time that had stood still started moving.

She laughed and small frogs came of her mouth. These frogs jumped out and ran all over the surface of the newly carved earth. They carried water in their bellies. When they would call to each other the water would spill. It was this water that became the rivers, lakes and oceans. Soon, trees, plants and shrubs came to be. With these came the animals and birds. Thus, life came to be on earth.

The rainbow serpent watched all this. Next, the rainbow serpent created the law and order for all living things to abide by. The first rule of this law was that the strong will not attack the weak. The second was that all creatures would care for each other. The third was that no creature would eat another creature. The fourth was all beings will live in deep harmony. Having set these rules the rainbow serpent was content.

However the animals and birds refused to obey the rainbow serpent. The strong would eat the weak. They would not care for each other. There was constant strife and conflict for land.

Seeing all this the rainbow serpent created the first human beings. The human beings were divided into various tribes with animal totems. They were humans from the Kangaroo tribe. There were humans from the emu tribe. There were humans from the carpet snake tribe. And so on.

These humans chose to live in harmony with nature and they would worship the rainbow snake for food and prosperity. The rainbow snake in return would bless them with virtues like kindness and gratitude.

The humans lived in deep harmony with nature. They never took more than nature wanted to give them. They respected and venerated nature. They were the wild's children.

When they were hungry they would sing:

O Tree, O Tree,

Give us a fruit.

When they were thirsty they would ask

O river, river,

Give us a drink

When they needed shelter they would say

O cave, cave,

Give us a home.

Thus, these tribal aborigines lived in great harmony with nature. They respected everything and everyone. They were grateful to the rainbow serpent and to nature. They set an example for all living beings. They taught the great lesson of sustainable living.

The rainbow serpent was very happy with the first humans and decided to retire to the heavens above.

There she went back to sleep. They say that when it rains you can see her shadow in the rainbow."

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Grade 8

Story 1 - The creativity of Ammavaru



Value - creativity

"Nani, tell us an interesting story" said Moni.

"I will tell you a story about the Goddess Ammavaru," said Nani.

"At Kailash, Vani, the Goddess of Speech was distraught. She knew something had gone terribly wrong. Her body which was composed of divine alphabets was disintegrating. She lost consciousness.

"Vani has fainted," said the Goddess Sita, also known as Maithali.

All the Gods and Goddesses rushed to where Vani was lain. Shiva took the Hanuman form and said, "Let me go to Dronagiri Mountain and get and the Sanjeevani herb. Maybe it will revive her."

"Go," said Vishnu taking his Ram form.

Hanuman expanded his body to the size of a mountain and swung his left foot back and right foot in front and set into flight. After 10 minutes he returned with the Dronagiri mountain, which he set on the ground. 300 monkeys from the Vanara

Sena climbed the mountain and the monkey Angad returned with the Sanjeevani herb. Maithali covered Vani's face with the Sanjeevani herb.

But of no avail. Vani didn't revive.

"What is wrong?" asked Ram, "even the Mritasanjeeva booti is not helping Vani!!"

"Ram shot a truth teller arrow and see what happened to Vani," said Maithali.

Ram took out his kodanda bow and shot a truth teller arrow into the sky. The arrow returned to Ram with a message tied in. The note read, "Mahishasur has used a nuclear weapon to destroy the alphabets of the Gods, since Vani's body is made of these alphabets she has lost consciousness.

"What do we do?" asked Shiva who changed back from the Hanuman form.

"We need to get the alphabets back," said Vishnu who had changed back from being Ram.

"Only Vani knows the secret of the alphabets and we may not be able to restore them," said Kali.

Actually, the battle between the Devas and the Asuras was primarily one of language. The devas had language @ infinity and the asuras envied them for the same. Language brought with it knowledge that dispelled the darkness of ignorance and the asuras were a personification of this darkness of ignorance. Losing the alphabets was a major loss and beyond that Vani was irrecoverably ill.

All were wondered what to do when the Goddess Ammavaru stepped in. She was the original mother of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh (Shiva). She said, "Our alphabets are immortal, the way we are. They are divine after all. They will restore in time. But we need to revive Vani now. I think the best way to do this to invent a language and place a protective cover of its words and syllables around Vani. My goddess intuition tells me she will revive."

Once there was a huge storm of swords that threatened the cosmos. This was during the time when time was yet to be born. The gods did not exist then neither were the demons there. The wishbones of history only knew silence and the void. It was out of this void that the Goddess Ammavaru was born to stop the storm of swords. She was thus the Eldest. It was she who was initiating the magic rite now.

Ammavaru called forth the Red Witches of Neverland for the rite. The red complexioned witches came dressed in long red coats and pointed red hats, carrying red brooms in their hands.

Ammavaru explained to them what was to be done.

"Undone, undone, undone," cried the witches.

"Undone be the deed of the asuras," said they.

They created a mandala made of redwood and grass and they took out a spell that cast out dread and spread words. It was the word creation spell. "Hasten and bring us the words. Hasten and cover her with words," they cried. They magically manifested a cauldron in which they threw in wine and a layer of cake, and spells innumerable.

Something wonderful was going to happen and they knew it. The stage was set for a divine language to be created. But the witches could not do it alone. They needed the Goddess Ammavaru.

Ammavaru tasted the witches potion with a ladle. She then burst into song. Her eyes teared as she cried over Vani's plight as well as joy over the coming creation.

She created a language called Varijati and in this language she was saying :
Sara Vidya, Sara Vidya, Sara Vidya, Sa
Kara Vidya, Kara Vidya, Kara Vidya, ka
Nara Vidya, Nara Vidya, Nara Vidya, na

Sa, ka, na Sa, ka, na

Sa ka na re pa da vi sa

Sa ka na re pa da vi sa

Soon, all the alphabets emerged from her voice. The witches used their wands to direct the alphabets to Vani. The alphabets covered Vani and restored her. The witches rejoiced and Durga hugged Ammavaru.

"We need to stop Mahishasur," said Kali.

Durga took out her paralyze evil arrow and fired it at the cosmos. It paralysed the asuras. Thus the creativity of Ammavaru saved the day," said Nani.

"Thank you," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 2 - The valour of the gods



Value - Bravery

"Nani, what does it take to be a god?" asked Moni.

"You have to be very valourous," said Nani, "in this context let me tell you a story."

"At Mount Meru there was an uproar. A divine Partridge delivered the note :

"Mahishasur has stolen the vedas from the Core of the Earth."

The trinity Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma along with the Vedic Gods Indra, Agni, Vayu, Surya, Chandra had assembled on Mount Meru to welcome the Goddesses.

"How did they steal the Vedas?" asked Durga.

"The Trust Betrayers must have helped them. Of all the races on Earth, they alone can touch the Vedas," said Shiva.

"Where is Mahishasur's group now? And what are they doing with the Vedas?" Kali asked.

"Let's send some tracking birds to find out where Mahishasur is with the Vedas?" said Shiva.

"Garudas," summoned Vishnu.

A million Garudas covered the sky with the command.

"What is the order, Sire?" they asked in Unison.

"Track the demon Mahishasur and give us news of his whereabouts. And check what he is doing with the Vedas," said the blue skinned Vishnu.

There was a clapping of wings and all the Garudas disappeared in a minute flying off in different directions. In 10 minutes a Garuda returned, "They are at Atala, the 17th Netherworld."

"They are trying to destroy the Vedas but have been unsuccessful so far."

Vishnu summoned the Pushpak Vahana, the flying machine that once belonged to Ravana. It was huge enough for all the Gods to climb in.

They reached Atala in a few seconds.

Pratyangira, the thousand headed lion faced form of Adi shakti said, "Don't do anything I will get the Vedas."

She jumped out and took the Vedas from Mahishasur's hand.

How did the asuras make a pathway to the Earth core where the Vedas are kept for the benefit of humanity?" asked Kali.

The Vedas were safe now. The gods went in the Pushpak viman to the core of the Earth to reinstall the Vedas. This was when they saw the passage that Raktabeej had dug from Quadracity to the Core.

"It is a mystery we will have to solve," said Durga.

"Has a machine done the work?" asked Shiva.

"Yes," said Vishnu, "but no machine that we know off."

"Let's call the Vishwakarma goblins to see if they know what could have created this hole," said Shiva.

The Vishwakarma goblins were summoned magically to the core of the Earth where everyone was assembled. The Vishwakarma goblins too didn't know of any machine that could dig so swiftly into the Earth and so smoothly."

"Garudas," Vishnumaya, a tall blue goddess, the AdiShakti form of Vishnu's illusionary power called the giant birds. "Go to all the worlds and see if you can find any strange demonic machine."

The great Garudas once again assembled and left for their mission.

"Kailash," said a Garuda who returned. "In Kailash, there is a secret pathway where all the asuric machines are kept."

"In Kailash," asked Shiva.

"Yes, Kailash."

The gods and goddesses head for the secret pathway in Kailash. The Garuda leads the way. The secret pathway in Kailash is in midst of a thick blackberry forest.

The lush forest sights and sounds please the gods and goddesses especially Durga who takes her Vana Durga, Forest Durga form.

As Forest Durga, the goddess is decorated with colourful wild flowers and lush wet creepers.

"It's not picnic time," Kali says with a smile.

"I can't see anything here," says Vishnu to the Garuda.

"That is because everything is hidden, fire the anti-maya astra and see the truth," said the Garuda.

Shiva takes out the Pinaka bow and fires the anti Maya astra. Instantly they see machines of various shapes and sizes hanging down from the trees, held by copper chains. The machines seem to be made from some unidentifiable metal alloy.

The Goblins of Vishwakarma are again summoned. They examine the machines with a great deal of interest.

"Very advanced technology has been used to create these," said the Goblin.

"Some are destructive, some are just machines that serve some unknown purpose," he added.

Suddenly, the Goddess Lalitha, she who is playful, cried, "Someone is stealing the Golden Key to the Sri Chakra."

The Sri Chakra was the Goddess's yantra which contained all the secrets to the creation and preservation of the cosmos. It was vital that the asuras don't get hold of it.

"How do you know?" asked Varahi, the boar faced head of Lalitha's army.

"I know with my power," said Lalitha, "the Sri Chakra is in danger."

"Where is the key?" asked Varahi.

"On Meru, hidden inside a kusa grass hut," said Lalitha.

"And where is the Sri Chakra?" asked Varahi.

"Also, in Mount Meru, buried under volcanic debris."

The Goddess Varahi magically called forth the 64000 yoginis to the secret pathway in Kailash. They appeared in a bright, blazing flash.

"Go to Mount Meru, with Lalitha, the red Goddess and guard her as she brings the Sri Cakra here."

The 64000 yoginis made the namaskar mudra with their hands.

With a swing of Lalitha's hand, Lalitha and the 640000 yoginis dismanifested from Kailash and re-manifested at the volcanic debris of Mount Meru.

The asuras lead by Mahishasur were nearby. Mahishasur was holding the golden key in his hand. They were hunting for the Sri Chakra. They grunted when they saw Lalitha and the yoginis.

Lalitha knew she couldn't kill Mahishasur for only Durga could do that at the appropriate time.

She took her sugarcane bow and fired a Sleep Missile. All the asuras went to sleep. Then, she asked the yoginis to stand around her in concentric circles - guarding her.

Lalitha fired a Hrim missile on the ground and it opened up. Inside the Sri Chakra lay exposed. It was a small coin of spinning gold. It was the most powerful yantra in the world. Lalitha picked it up and left for Kailash with the yoginis. Thus, the valour of the gods saved the day," said Nani.

"Wonderful story, Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 3 - Littler, Middler and Elder



Value: You turn into what your mind thinks of

"Nani, tell us a monster story," said Moni.

"Sure," said Nani.

"Three monsters were wandering by a Bay berry bush. The first one was called Littler, the second Middler and the third Elder.

Littler was the smallest, the size of a humming bird. He looked like a humming bird too and he kept buzzing around Middler and Elder.

Middler was quite a Muddler - literally too. He loved living in the mud and was known as the mud worthy one. And guess what? He was made of fine clay.

Elder was a bid cuddly creature. He has fine hair that flowed uptill his knees.

They walked fast and they walked slow. They walked fast when it was sunny and they walked slow when it rained.

They flew and they swam. All the three of them had wings. So they would fly when the breeze was good and when it rained big puddles of water, they would swim in the pools of water.

Something happened, one day, because of which this story came into being.

A wise grandduck came into their city, the city of magic. The wise grandduck was the Duke of Kansas, the city of made dreams. The grandduck brought with him three dreams

- Of a squat fly
- Of a dragon
- Of a dragonfly

He walked to give these dreams to the worthy.

Along his way he met Littler, Middler and Elder. He liked the three of them and so he gave them the three dreams.

Littler got the dream of the squat fly.

Middler got the dream of the dragon.

Elder got the dream of the dragonfly.

Once they got the dreams, they went to sleep and the dreams entered them.

After a day they woke up. Littler had turned into a squat fly. Middler became a dragon. Elder became a dragonfly.

"How did this happen?" they went to ask the wise grandduck.

The grandduck said, "you turn into whatever your mind thinks of, such is the rule."

Then said Littler, "I want to be a knight in shining armour who saves people."

"So do I," said Middler.

"So do I," said Elder

The wise grandduck returned to and back from the city of Kansas to get them three dreams of the knight in shining armour.

The new dreams entered them and they went to sleep. When they woke up they had all turned into knights in shining Armor. Then they set off to save the world from forces of darkness and ignorance. And the moral of the story is that you turn into whatever you think of."

Story 4 - The Wizard of Wiseness



Value: Manysidedness of reality

"Nani, why do people have different versions of the same truth?" asked Moni.

"Moni, truth is many not one. There are no absolutes in life. Listen to this story in this context -

There was **once** a red striped pigeon that was a little strange. It was called Wishmenot. It always wondered how the world was made.

It went to the City of Oz to find the Wizard of Wiseness. The Wizard of Wiseness had a white beard that touched his feet.

"Tell me, o renowned wizard, how the world was made?" asked Wishmenot.

"Listen to this story," said the Wizard of Wiseness.

"Once there was a great storm and out of this great storm came a seed. Out of the seed grew a tree and of the tree grew a round fruit. It was called the Earth. This became our world." "Thanks for the story," said Wishmenot.

"Listen Wishmenot this is not the only story on how the world came to be," said the Wizard of Wiseness.

"Listen to another story -

Once upon a time a boy was lost in space. To console him, the Goddess of Space made him a ball of clay and water to play with.

This ball of clay and water became the Earth in which we all live,"

"Wow, what a lovely story" said Wishmenot.

"Stop," said the Wizard of Wiseness. "There is another story -

Once there was a clay idol. This idol was all that existed anywhere. Inside this clay idol was the spirit of the creator God Vishalakarya. One day Vishalakarya got bored and he stepped out of the idol. He wanted a place to stay in. So he turned the mud of the idol into a round ball. This became the Earth and the spirit of Vishalakarya still dwells in it."

"Wow," said Wishmenot, "Is that all?"

The Wizard of Wiseness said, "It is never all, "there is another story listen to this -

Once upon a time, there was a wind called Kala was born. It was the wind of destruction. It wanted something to play football with, so it fashioned a ball with its innate power. This ball Kala played football with was the Earth."

"O," said a fearful Wishmenot, who became afraid of Kala, the wind of destruction. He asked, "Is there any other pleasanter version?"

"Sure, there are millions," said the Wizard of Wiseness. "Truth never has one version.," said the Wizard of Wiseness.

And Wishmenot was impressed."

"Thanks Nani," said Moni and Natasha.

Story 5 - Buddhi's Greed



Value: Absence of greed

"Nani, what do you hate the most?" asked Moni.

"Moni dear, I hate greed the most because it is very destructive," said Nani, "in this context let me tell you a story.

"In a village, lived two old women called Siddhi and Buddhi. Both were extremely poor.

One day Buddhi got an idea to become rich. In their village was a temple dedicated to the Yaksha Bholaka. He had the power to grant wealth and wishes to devotees. Buddhi resolved to earnestly worship him till he granted her wealth. Buddhi started cleaning the Yaksha's temple and worshipping him according to protocol.

Soon the Yaksha became pleased with Buddhi and asked, "What boon do you desire?"

Buddhi said, "I am poor my lord, make me rich."

"Granted," said the Yaksha.

Soon Buddhi found a gold coin everyday at the foot of the temple. Her wish had been accepted. She soon became very wealthy. Buddhi got an elaborate palace built for herself with golden pillars and gem-stone laden ceilings.

Siddhi, who was still poor, felt envious of Buddhi's wealth. She took Buddhi aside and asked her the secret behind the opulence. Buddhi told Siddhi all about the Yaksha.

Siddhi too started worshipping at the Yaksha's temple with freshly picked flowers and fruits. Soon, Bholaka was pleased with her too.

"What do you want?" he asked.

"I want twice of what you gave my friend," asked Siddhi.

"Sure," said the Yaksha and granted Siddhi her wish.

Soon Siddhi built a palace twice as lush as Buddhi's. Buddhi felt envious and again worshipped the Yaksha, and this time she asked for twice of what the Yaksha had given to Siddhi.

Siddhi, naturally evil being, burnt with rage. She decided to do something different. She worshipped the Yaksha and asked for a wish that he blind her in one eye.

The greedy Buddhi knew that Siddhi had made one more wish of the Yaksha. So she again worshipped him and this time again asked him to grant her twice of what he had given Siddhi.

The Yaksha obliged and Buddhi found herself blind in both eyes. Thus she paid a terrible price for her greed," said Nani.

Story 6 - The story of Dhruva



Value: Perseverance and positive thinking

"Nani, I hate studying for exams" said Moni.

"So do I," confessed Natasha.

"This attitude wont help," said Nani, "only positive thinking and perseverance will work. Listen to this story in this context -

Manu Swayambhuva had two heroic and pious sons, Priyavrata and Uttanapada. Of these two, the latter had a son whom he dearly loved, Uttama, by his favourite wife Suruchi. By his queen, named Suniti, to whom he was less attached, he also had a son, called Dhruva. Seeing his brother Uttama seated on the lap of his father on the throne, Dhruva felt the desire to also be seated on his father's lap. Since Suruchi was present, the Raja did not gratify the desire of his son. Seeing the child of her rival thus desirous of being placed on his father's lap, Suruchi thus addressed the boy: "Why, child, do you indulge in such presumptuous hopes? You are born from a different mother, and are no son of mine, that you should aspire to a station fit for my son Uttama alone. It is true you are the son of the Raja, but I

have not given you birth. This regal throne, the seat of the king of kings, is suited to my son only."

Dhruva, having heard the speech of his step-mother, left his father, and repaired in agitation to the apartment of his own mother; who, beholding him strained, took him upon her lap, and, gently smiling, asked him what was the cause of his anger.

Dhruva repeated to her all that the arrogant Suruchi had said to him in the presence of the king. Deeply distressed by the narrative of her son, Suniti sighed and said, "Suruchi has rightly spoken; your child's is an unhappy fate. The regal throne, the umbrella of royalty, horses and elephants, are his whose virtues have deserved them: remember this, my son, and be consoled. Therefore, my son, it is not proper for you to grieve."

Dhruva answered; "Mother, the words that you have addressed to me for my consolation find no place in my heart. I will exert myself to obtain such an elevated rank, that I shall be revered by the whole world. Though I be not born of Suruchi, the beloved of the king, you shall behold my glory. Let Uttama my brother, her child, possess the throne given to him by my father; I wish for no other honours than as my own actions shall get.

Dhruva then left the city and entered an adjoining thicket, where he beheld seven Munis sitting upon hides of the black antelope, which they had spread over the holy kusa grass. Saluting them reverentially, and bowing humbly before them, the prince said, "Behold in me, venerable men, the son of Uttanapada, born of Suniti. Dissatisfied with the world, I appear before you."

The Rishis replied; "The son of a king, and but four or five years of age, there can be no reason, child, why you should be dissatisfied with life; you cannot be in want of anything while the king your father reigns; we cannot imagine that you suffer the pain of separation from the object of your affections, nor do we observe in your person any sign of disease. What is the cause of your discontent?"

Dhruva said; "Excellent sages, I wish not for riches, neither do I want dominion: I aspire to such a station as no one before me has attained. Tell me what I must do to effect this object; how I may reach an elevation superior to all other persons."

The Rishis severally so replied:

Marichi said, "If you desire an exalted station, meditate on that supreme reality in whom, immutable and undecaying, all that is, exists."

Dhruva replied, " May you instruct me on how I am to propitiate the supreme reality." The Rishis answered; "The mind must first be made to forsake all external impressions and the yogi must then fix it steadily on the supreme reality.""

The prince, having received these instructions, respectfully saluted the sages, and departed from the forest. He went to the holy place, on the banks of the Yamuna, called Madhu or Madhuvana, the grove of Madhu, after the demon of that name, who formerly abided there. Here, Dhruva performed penance, as recommended by Marichi and the sages: he contemplated upon the supreme reality.

As he stood upon his left foot, one hemisphere of the earth bent beneath him and when he stood upon his right, the other half of the earth sank down. When he touched the earth with his toes, it shook with all its mountains and the rivers and the seas were troubled, and the Gods became aware of the cosmic agitation.

The celestials called Yamas, becoming alarmed, took counsel with Indra on how they should interrupt the devout prayers of Dhruva.

Afflicted by the devotions of the boy, they assembled and repaired for succour to Hari and thus addressed him, "Terrified by the ascetic practices of the son of Uttanapada, we have come to you for succour. Please allay the fervour of his

meditations. We know not to what station he aspires: to the throne of Indra, the regency of the solar or lunar sphere, or to the kingship of riches or of the deep. Have compassion on us, lord; remove this affliction from us, divert the son of Uttanapada from persevering in his penance." Vishnu replied to the Gods; "The boy desires neither the rank of Indra, nor the solar orb, nor the rulership of wealth or of the ocean: all that he desires, I will grant."

Hari assuming a shape with four arms, proceeded to Dhruva, and thus addressed him, "Son of Uttanapada, be prosperous. Contented with your devotions, I, the giver of boons, am present. Demand what boon you desire. I am pleased with you. Ask for a suitable boon." The boy, hearing these words of Vishnu, opened his eyes, and beholding that Hari whom he had before seen in his meditations actually in his presence, bearing in his hands the shell, the discus, the mace, the bow, and scimeter, and crowned with a diadem, he bowed his head down to earth and his heart was filled with awe.

Dhruva answered, "The sister-queen of my mother's said to me, 'The royal throne is not for one who is not born of me;' and I now solicit ~~of~~ the support of the universe to an exalted station, superior to all others, and one that shall endure for ever." Vishnu said to him; "The station that you ask you will obtain." And in this

manner Dhruva was made the pole star through his own dedication, positive thinking and perseverance."

Story 7 - Chakreshwari and the rain



Value: Forgiveness

"Nani Nani," pestered Natasha, "tell us a story about an evil princess."

"Why evil princess, Nat, why not a good one?" asked Moni

"Because I have heard so many stories about good princesses, but never about an evil one," said Natasha.

"Let me tell you the story of Chakreshwari," said Nani, "her story has a very evil princess in it."

"Yeeeeeeeeeeew ," shrieked Natasha and Moni.

"Chakreshwari was a very sweet Jain lay person. Her voice was just like her - very sweet, it was like veena playing, it resonated from the depths of some unknown peaceful space. It was said that the Devas were very pleased with her and they had given her permission to make it rain whenever she wished."

"Wow," said Natasha.

"What did she do with the boon?" asked Moni.

"Since she got this boon," continued Nani, "Chakreshwari would wander and look for places where there was a drought. Here, she would sit and wish for the rains. And it would rain too - profusely and densely till the land bloomed with dense vegetation. Chakreshwari only did this because she loved helping people and making their lives beautiful. However many evil people started envying her. One such person was the Princess Rajkumari who didn't want any woman to be more famous than her."

"What did Princess Rajkumari do?" asked Natasha.

"Through great guile, Princess Rajkumari had Chakreshwari arrested and accused her of being a witch. The verdict that Princess Rajkumari passed was that Chakreshwari had to be hanged for her sins. Chakreshwari quietly submitted to this without protesting."

"So, did Chakreshwari die?"

"No," said Nani, "On the day Chakreshwari was to be hanged, a severe drought hit the kingdom and Princess Rajkumari realized her mistake. She released Chakreshwari and asked her to bring rain. The rain came and a changed Princess Rajkumari hugged Chakreshwari. Chakreshwari forgave her."

"Thank you Nani," said Natasha.

"Thank you Nani," said Moni.

Story 8 - Ajitkumar and the Monster



Value - Forgiveness

"Nani Nani," yelled Moni and Natasha as they jumped into their grandmother's bed, "tell us a story about a big, bad monster."

"I will be the big, bad monster if you two naughties don't sleep now," said Nani.

"No Nani," groaned Moni

"No Nani," groaned Natasha

"Tell us a story about a monster," they pleaded.

"Ok," said Nani, "let me tell you the story of Ajitkumar and the monster."

"Yipeeee," yelled Moni and Natasha

"Listen to the story of Ajitkumar," said Nani. "Ajitkumar was very kind and very holy. Ajitkumar knew the truth about all existence. He had also founded an empire where thousands of people lived very happily and in perfect kindness."

"Cool," said Moni, "was he the greatest king India had known?"

"One of the greatest," said Nani, "But later, Ajitkumar renounced his empire to become a Jain monk wandering mountains and riverside fields to see life face to face."

"Nani," Natasha moaned, "I don't want to hear about Ajitkumar. I want to hear about the monster."

"Be patient dear," said Nani, "Once when Ajitkumar was wandering in a village he heard of a monster who used to devour people whole. The villagers lived in constant fear of the monster. Ajitkumar felt very sorry for the poor villagers and felt it was important he did something for them. He stood under a peepal tree and assumed the *karyotsarga* posture and started meditating. He wanted to strengthen himself to combat the monster.

After two years of such penance Ajitkumar knew he was ready to conquer the monster. He set off to meet the monster in the Red mountain where the monster lived."

"He must be very brave," said Moni.

"He was brave, yes, but also sad," said Nani, "as he walked he felt tears falling off his cheeks. His was a difficult job - he had to destroy the monster - and win the '*Just War*' for the people of the village. He hoped he will be able to complete it. He

slowly climbed the mountain. Suddenly, he heard a voice - strong and terrible, that resonated through the pillar like ancient trees."

"The monster, I am sure it's the monster, yippee," yelled Natasha.

"Yes it was," said Nani grimly, "the monster had seen Ajitkumar. Suddenly something rolled down from the mountain - it was the dark, evil heart of the monster. The moment the monster set eyes on the Ajitkumar, his evil heart died and left him. What was left of the monster was just his soul which was not evil."

"So, the monster doesn't die?" asked Moni

"Yes," said Nani, "the monster continued to live, but as a good being. The people of the village forgave the monster for his past sins and the monster too was unharmed. Such was the greatness of Ajitkumar."

"Thank you Nani," said Natasha, "that is a lovely story."

"Thank you Nani," said Moni.

They both hugged Nani and fell asleep.