

Dadi-Nani Ki Kahaani

(Inspiring stories for children)

Shakun Narain Kimatrai



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Women's Movement for Peace and Prosperity (WMPP)

Dal-sabzi for the Aatman:

www.dalsabzi.com

<http://shacune.blogspot.com>

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FOREWORD

I met Shakun Narain after Sept 11,2001, after a lot of us gaped in horror, as we witnessed a horrendous terrorist operation.

Terrorism struck Bombay in 1993, in the form of several bomb blasts, killing people and damaging buildings and the confidence of its inhabitants.

Everywhere one looked, one encountered uncertainty for ones future, for ones well-being, for ones children.

I wondered, what to do, about it? If we, at the 'Times Group' were not going to do something, who would?

I have always believed that Human Consciousness grows when it goes through crisis and pain.

And the world has had a big chunk of that.

I started to think, and to think hard! I came up with the idea that one of the ways to unite the world was to spread the knowledge that was common to all religions. We called it 'Singularity of All Faiths'. I also believed that the time had come for the good people to connect!

Maya Shahani, a multifaceted charming, lady, became instrumental in bringing together interesting thinking people from different religions and different walks of life to the group.

I was introduced to Shakun, through Maya. Various other eminent people, from around the world, joined in discussions as to how we should bring peace to the riot torn planet.

The Women's Movement for Peace and Prosperity was then, and thus conceived under the umbrella of Times Foundation drawing its inspiration from Smt. Indu Jain, Chairman of Times Group and Times Foundation.

WMPP adopted 7 methodologies to realize its vision.

Shakun Narain took the lead in its Spiritual Initiative and the Interfaith Dialogue.

Smt Indu Jain, invited representatives of over 80 Spiritual Organizations, and introduced them to the Spiritual Initiative. Smt. Indu Jain also, offered to WMPP, a large conference room, in the Times of India Building and a free hand to Shakun to realize her dream of Spiritual Upliftment.

Shakun Narain has a Vision!

She believes in an education which will teach the children to smile forever.

We all agree that there may be differences in various religions and cultures.

The need of the hour is not to 'tolerate' them but to 'celebrate' them.

She believes in the Hindu concept of 'Vasudeva Kutumbakam'(The world is God's family).

How does a regular person help?

By listening to hearts.

By opening our homes to neighbors of different creeds, and listen to understand, and not to argue!

Shakun believes that the world has now, got to stop hurling stones, as we all live in glass houses.

She believes in the world of Electronic Mail that we live in. She believes in using the 'pen' rather than the 'sword'

She conducts discourses, sings, pens books, has an active website called 'Dal-sabzi for the Aatman' which stores the weekly mailer started by her.

Soon after, she started to 'send' us 'Dadi Nani ki Kahaani' by electronic mail. I must confess that I enjoyed the short, informative stories, on 'Dadi-Nani' even more, and regularly praised her efforts.

Shakun's vision extends beyond the horizon.

She wants to spread the concept of Spirituality to schools, colleges, corporates and to next-door neighbors.

Her Spiritual Initiative is working on a work-shop 'Gems of all Faiths', whose aim is to highlight the similarities of Religions.

She conducts classes for children, and teaches people from different parts of the world, the wisdom of the Ramayana, the Geeta and other Scriptures.

And now, she is releasing a third revised edition of the book 'Dadi Nani ki Kahaani' in English (Dadi Nani ki Kahaani has been translated in Hindi and Urdu) which will educate the citizens of tomorrow with the same message: That all Religions teach love, and that we need to reach out to one another, to preserve the planet that we share.

'Dadi- Nani ki Kahaani includes, lives and teachings of Great Prophets, like Moses, Mohammed, Christ, Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Mahaavira, Guru Nanak, Deities, Personalities, Stories from the Shrimad Bhaagvad, Ramayana, a Spectre of Festivals...

All the stories, in simple, child-friendly language, celebrate the similarities of messages imparted by all the Great Beings that walked the planet.

I am convinced that not only will the children be inspired, but the parents will also enjoy the simple wisdom imparted in the book.

Our dream is that one page from this book is read, at the daily school assembly hall.

In pursuit of this vision we continue to provide a free copy with our compliments, to each school in India, starting with Mumbai.

I know that Shakun's dream will turn into reality!

And when that happens, I will feel delighted in knowing, that I played a part in it!

Ram Maheshwary

Former Dy Director (Times Foundation)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply indebted to the Spiritual teachers that came my way, gave me pearls of wisdom, and like sculptors, hammered and chiseled different facets of my personality. I thank my mother, Mrs.Lajwanti Khiani, for being the instrument in instilling a spiritual interest in me.

My husband Narain Kimatrai, my children Sunder, Saira, Madhavi, Mohan, Anuja have trusted, encouraged and supported me, in my Spiritual ventures. My sincere gratitude goes to them.

I have a Vision that the concept of Spirituality spreads to Schools, colleges, corporates and to next-door neighbors.

I thank Smt. Indu Jain, chairman of Times of India Group and Mr. Ram Maheshwary, Dy Director (TF) & Head - Mumbai Br, for believing in me and for helping me turn my dream into reality.

My gratitude goes to various Principals for including me in their Vision of ' Value Education' for tomorrow's leaders.

My wish is, that one page from 'Dadi Nani ki Kahaani' is read, at the daily school assembly hall, and a free copy of the book is provided, to each school in India, starting with Mumbai.

This, third edition of Dadi Nani ki Kahaani in English has been sponsored by Mr Ramchand and Mrs Chandri Pohoomal.

My heartfelt gratitude to them for being a part of my Vision

I thank my grandson Aditya, for being instrumental, in inspiring me to start 'Dadi Nani ki Kahaani' stories.

Thank you, Mr Mahajan for all your assistance in bringing out the present edition of the book.

Accept the Love from my heart to yours,

Shakun Narain Kimatrai

9th October 2008

Vijay Dashmi



My husband Narain Kimatrai (extreme left) My daughter Anuja (extreme right) and our 5 grandchildren

A few words from me:

Hello Children,

Do you know what a joint family is?

It is, when parents, grand-parents, uncles and aunts live together in the same house.

Sometimes, fathers and mothers, with their children, live in different parts of the world. I mean to say, that the grandparents, uncles and aunts, do not live with them.

My grand children, are also not staying, in the same town as I am.

And though I visit them, and they me, as often as possible, I miss them.

My grandson Aditya had asked me to write for him, a simple story of Krishna, so that he could share it with his friends. So I thought why not share it with all other children?

And then another thought occurred to me. The world is going through troubled times.

People are confused about different religions, and what message, they are trying to impart.

Do different religions give you a different message? No!

The common message in all religions, is that of love, compassion, brotherhood, peace! The message of Krishna, Christ, Allah, Buddha is the same.

This is how Dadi- Nani- ki- Kahaani (Granny's Stories) was born!

I hope that you enjoy them as much as my grand-children do.

I dedicate these stories to my grand-children, Aysha, Aditya, Shazia, Kiran, Jai, and to all my 'reader grand-children' around the world.

With love,

Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

Some Introductory Stories

THE BIRTH OF RELIGIONS

People have always wondered, who created the world, and why.

The above question, also arose, in the minds of the people who lived, many many years ago.

These ancient people started to have faith in an intelligent, Benign (good) Being, who they called God.

These people developed their own method of worship.

That is how so many religions came into existence.

Since the Sun gives Light, Warmth, and therefore Life, many ancient religions worshipped the Sun as god.

When people learned to cultivate crops, they realized that rains were important.

So they started to believe in a rain god and developed a method of worship.

For various such reasons, ancient people worshipped mountains, rivers, trees etc.

Since man is happy when he receives gifts, the ancient people started to believe that gods could be made happy, by the offering of presents. Some practices arose which included various sacrifices to please the gods.

The ancient people started to build a house of god. The Hindus call it a temple, the Christians, a church.

These houses of/for God were/are run by priests.

These priests, sometimes, stated that such and such worship was/is required, for the well-being of the person, for the problem that he was/is currently facing.

Elaborate, expensive modes of worship came into existence.

When you go deep into any/every religion, it states that to please God, all one requires is a compassionate, loving, caring and nurturing heart.

Let us look at how some of the religions, came into existence, and what they believe in.

With love,

Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

MESSAGE OF FAITHS

Dear Children,

I have already told you that all ALL RELIGIONS SPEAK OF LOVE, FAITH, BROTHERHOOD.

I would like to explain to you about some misconceptions and misinterpretations.

Those are big words. Do you understand them?

Well, have you heard of the whispering game?

You say a word into someone else's ear and she passes it on. The last person who hears the word, tells the rest, what she heard.

The word that she heard turns out to be, quite different from the one that was at first whispered, in her ear.

This is what has happened with some statements made in the Holy Scriptures. People understood them differently, from what they were meant to convey.

Let us look at some of misconceptions.

You may have heard of the caste system and how people call some people 'untouchable' I think that it is a very rude thing to say.

Let me tell you about Shabri.

Shabri

Shabri was a woman of 'low caste'.

Do you know children, that Hindu Scriptures speak of the four castes, which is nothing but four types of professions.

Let me tell you about them.

The first is Brahmin. The Learned, professors, priests...

The Second is the Kshtriyas: The warriors, soldiers, protectors...

The third is the Vaishyas: the Commercial community, shop keepers, traders...

The fourth is the Shudras: The working community, those who serve the first three...

In ancient India, the above were considered professions, and one could change them at will. Thus, if one was born into the business community, no one could stop him from becoming a teacher or washing dishes in a restaurant.

As time passed, the learned class started to feel very arrogant and believed themselves to be the highest, because they were the most learned and knew the Scriptures.

They imposed the ‘law’ that if one was born into one caste, they would remain there for life.

And so the menial workers were referred to as ‘low’ and later ‘untouchable’

But you know children, if the so called ‘low castes’ had been taught Sanskrit, and to read and write it, they would have known that God did not recognize such a terrible ‘law’

I am going to tell you the story of Shabri.

Shabri belonged to the ‘low caste’

No one befriended her.

So she lived alone.

Her Guru had told her, that Sri Ram would one day visit her cottage.

(I have already told you the story of Ram and Sita).

Shabri would decorate her cottage with beautiful flowers every day, hoping that that would be the wonderful day, that Sri Ram would visit her.

One day Ram arrived at her village, as he traveled, far and wide, in his search for Sita.

And He did visit Shabri cottage.

Shabri was beside herself with joy.

She made him sit and brought a plate of berries for him to eat.

She wanted to make sure that they were sweet. It is popularly believed that she tasted the berries before giving them to Sri Ram to eat.

And you know what? Sri Ram ate them with great relish.

Sri Ram was happy at the faith and love that Shabri possessed.

The people in the village were appalled at Shabri's audacity, but could say nothing to Sri Ram.

They requested Sri Ram to restore the water that had dried up in the well of the village.

Sri Ram said that, that would happen if Shabri bathed in the water of the well, first.

Shabri did. And fresh water returned to the dry well!

Remember children, no one is born high or low. We become 'high' or 'low' by the way we act.

So as I stated:

CASTE SYSTEMS STARTED OUT AS VARIOUS PROFESSIONS.
A teacher could become a soldier and a businessman could become a teacher or a menial worker, if circumstances willed it, or if he so desired.

IDOL WORSHIP IS A FORM TO FOCUS ON. Just like a flag stands for the nation and a father's photograph represents the father.
ONE HAS TO GO BEYOND THE FORM, WHEN ONE PRAYS...
ALSO GOD BEING OMNI-PRESENT RESIDES IN THE FORM TOO.

CHRISTIANITY stands for **LOVE SERVICE AND BROTHERHOOD.**
CHRIST DIED for the **TRUTH.**
HE BELIEVED THAT GOD DID NOT REQUIRE AN INTERMEDIARY
BUT COULD BE APPROACHED THROUGH LOVE AND SERVICE.

GURU NANAK GOT RID OF SUPERSTITIONS AND SO DID BUDDHA

JIHAAD

Hindu Scriptures, The Bible and the Quran speak of God, prophets, Liberation, Heaven and Hell.
Early Quranic verses speak of the word 'Jihaad' as an internal fight between good and evil.

When the Muslim community was settling in Medina, they were attacked.

Innocent people were killed, but the Muslim did not fight back.
Later when this continued, they stood up in self-defense and the word 'Jihad' is then used in the Koran as this war was for survival.

I have heard scholars state that Islam does not propagate bloodshed in any form.

Then why do people commit violence? I think that it is because they do not understand the real pure meaning of the Holy books.

Maybe this 'Dadi Nani ki Kahaani' has been a little difficult to understand. Ask mummy/daddy to explain it to you.

You are the leaders of tomorrow and you must not fight with one another, because you belong to a different faith.

Remember, that all the Great Prophets and Holy Books talk about Peace and Friendship...and to forgive and forget...and not to repeat mistakes.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Celebrations in January

Happy New Year

Epiphany

Makar Sankraanti is celebrated on the 14th of January.

Pongal is celebrated in Tamil Nadu.

26th January is Republic Day

The Constitution of India came into force in 1950

Freedom from British rule came in 1947

Tai Pusam is also celebrated in January.

Subramanya is the son of Shiva and Parvati.

He is also called Shanmukha, the one with six faces. One day Parvati gifted her son a magical spear that always returns after it is thrown because she was very happy when she saw her son with only one face like any other child. Tai Pusam celebrates her joy!

Guru Govindsingh (10th and last Sikh Guru's birth anniversary)

Thought on The New Year

Dear children,

Every New Year, most people make new resolutions.

But do they work? And if they do, for how long? I would like to share with you something that I read in 'Awaken the Giant within' by Anthony Robbins that seems to make sense.

Associate pain with a habit that you are trying to break...

Ok, let me see if I can make it simpler. Maybe you have the habit of not doing your homework when you should. What will happen is that when all your friends go out to play, you will be at home trying to complete your work!

Now what I would like you to do is connect the pain that you feel (when your friends are playing while you try and complete your school work) at the time when you are trying to avoid doing your homework.

If you reach a level of pain that you are not willing to settle for anymore, you change your old habits. You could hurt at the sight of the pained look of your parents when they feel that you have not got the result that you are capable of, because you have not put in your best effort. You finally you say, ' I have had it ' and you make a decision.

It is good to desire to remove pain from your life and establish the pleasure of self esteem.

May all your dreams come true this coming year. May we have the strength to kick our old debilitating habits and may we all experience tremendous pleasure at the idea of adopting a new empowering Life.

Have a great year!

Epiphany Christ and Krishna

Dear Friends,
Christmas is the Festival that celebrates the child in us!
Do share the following story with your children.

Dear Children,
Did you know that there are interesting similarities in the life of Christ and Krishna?
Their names also sound similar.
Kansa, the king of Mathura was warned that a child (already born) would kill him (Kansa) when the child grew up.
So Kansa decided to kill young babies.
Herod, the king of Palestine was also warned of being killed at the hand of a child born recently...Herod also decided to slaughter the new-borns.
Krishna was born in jail and Christ in a manger.
Both were saved from the wrath of Herod and Kansa.
Hindus believe that Krishna is an Avtaar (Incarnation) of God.
In simple words, God came to earth taking the body of a human being.
Christ's birth commemorates the manifestation of divinity in the world.
In simple words, it means that godly things came to earth along with Jesus' birth.

While we are on the subject of Jesus' birth, let me tell you a few more things connected with it. You all have heard of Christmas. Have you heard of Epiphany?
Epiphany is called the 'Festival of Lights' and it falls on the 12th day after Christmas.
When I was a child and lived in Spain, we used to get gifts on the day of 'Reyes'.
Reyes literally means 'Kings' and it is on that day (5th of January) that the Wise men from the East visited baby Jesus and gave him the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

It is believed that the Wise Kings, were led to baby Jesus by a bright star in the sky. I like to believe that it was the position of stars. The kings were probably learned astrologers, and the stars predicted the birth of a divine child.
The Kings came from the East. I like to believe that maybe they came from India.

Krishna said: "Sarva bhuta hite ratah" which means that ones must act for the good of humanity. Christ's main teaching was that of love and service. All religions that I have read about practice meditation, and chanting in one form or another. For a Christian, to practice meditation is to become aware of God who resides in the stillness of ones heart.

Do you know what Chanting means? It means 'to repeat a spiritual word or short phrase from a Scripture, over and over again'. It is a kind of prayer. And it is supposed to be powerful. If you ask me, I believe the constant chanting keeps one, from thinking unnecessary thoughts. One listens to ones Mantra as one repeats it...And God likes that! God does not like it when we constantly think and worry about things and situations that

cannot be helped. God likes it, when after one does ones best, One lets go (of the problem) and lets God (handle it).

Chanting is practiced in all the major religions. Hindus chant Mantras with the help of a 'mala' and Christians repeat the 'Hail Mary' with the help of a rosary. Hindus chant Aum, Christians say 'Amen' Both sound similar.

Hindus chant 'Hare Rama' Christians chant "Maranatha" (Means: The Lord comes) I believe that both the prayers reach the Lord at the same time. What is important is to pray with a pure heart. And all Great Masters appeared on Earth to teach us the above fact.

Ponder on the above facts. Jesus said: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" And your neighbor is one who lives next door to you and shares the same neighborhood or building. We share the same planet and as such, all who live in this world are our neighbors. And we must learn to love one another.

Think about it.

Cansaulim Zatra is celebrated in Goa in the following manner: Men climb up to a church on a small hill near Cansaulim. They celebrate the arrival of the three kings from the East who came to visit baby Jesus.

With love,
Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Makar Sankraanti

Dear Children,

I am sure that when you hear about the Festival ‘Makar Sankraanti’ the first thing that you think of, is that on that day, you will get to fly kites. And that is a lot of fun! Is’nt it?

Makar Sankraanti always falls on the 14th of January.

This day is considered so auspicious that Bhishma, who was a hero, of the Mahaabhaarata, chose to die after this day, even though he lay on a bed of arrows. Bhishma had a boon, by which he could choose his time of death.

During January, it is very cold. Sesame seeds have a warmth giving quality and it makes Spiritual practices easy. That is the reason why people distribute ‘til laddus’ at this festival.

Since the Sun begins its Northward Revolution, during this time, the direction of the wind changes. This is the reason, why it is traditional to fly kites on this day.

There is something very beautiful about flying kites. You remain on the ground, but the kite in your hand soars towards the heavens.

Read stories of great personalities and aspire to become like them. This is what I call reaching for the stars. People who dreamt about changing the world, did!

I have told you the story of Abdul Kalam, the Indian President. He came from a modest home in a small village. Went on to become, a great Scientist and the President of India.

There are many other success stories.

The way to achieve success, is to believe in oneself and ones dream, and then systematically work towards ones goal. Do you know what that means?

Well, if you want to become a doctor, you will have to study to become one.

You can dream all you like, but unless, you put in your effort, your dream will always remain a dream.

What do you want to become in your life? Think about it, work hard, do your best, pray and leave it to the Lord! I am sure that your dreams will come true.

Think about what I have told you, when you fly a kite on this festival.

GURU GOVIND SINGH

Baisaakhi and The Panj Pyaaras

Dear Children,

Guru Govind Singh was the last Guru of the Sikhs.

He was active, cheerful fearless and a born leader.

Hindus and Muslims were equally dear to him. He also believed that for a ruler, all his subjects should be considered like his own children.

To him, true worship meant doing ones duty to the best of ones capacity.

The Northern Indians herald the harvesting season by celebrating ‘Baisaakhi’

On the day of the Baisaakhi, Guru Govinsinghji, the 10th Guru of the Sikhs, assembled his Sikhs at Anandpur, and constituted the ‘Khalsa’ order.

He called the Sikhs ‘Khalsas’ the pure ones.

It is interesting to learn why and how the title of ‘Singh’ came into being.

No Sikh prayer is complete without remembering the 5 Pyaaras. Let me tell you about their bravery. These 5 demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that they were not afraid of death.

It was a practice for the Gurus to hold annual conferences on Baishaakhi day. In one such meeting in the year 1699, Guru Gobind Singh asked for 5 volunteers who would be willing to give their life for a just cause. He took the volunteer to a nearby tent and returned with a sword dripping with blood. He repeated the same process with 4 more volunteers. Then, Guru Gobind Singh surprised the multitude, by returning with the five volunteers alive and well. These ‘five’ were honored by being conferred the title of ‘5 Pyaaras’ meaning ‘The 5 loved ones’ He gave them a new surname ‘Singh’ (Lion) to be connected to their name. Kaur (Princess) was the suffix to be added to the girls’ names as they grew up.

The Punjabis sow new crops and dance the ‘Bhaangra’.

It is believed that the holy River Ganga descended from Heaven on Baishaakhi day.

The last Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Govind Singh stood for national unity and fearlessness. Guru Govind Singh prayed: "...*Shubha Karman Te kabahoona daroon*" (Grant me the boon, that I am never afraid of performing good deeds)

Let us always also pray for national unity and International Brotherhood. We must do everything in our power to help anyone, everyone, everywhere who may be in physical, emotional or spiritual need.

What do you think?

With love, Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

January/February

Known as **Baqr-Id**, Id-ul-Azha is celebrated on the 10th day of Zil Hajj, the last month of the Islamic year.

RAMZAN and BAKRI ID

Dear children,

Ramzan is the only month in the Muslim calendar which is specially mentioned in the Holy Koran. It is during this month that devout Muslims fast and pray, for a month. They do not eat or drink anything between sunrise and sunset, dawn and dusk. This is known as the Roza.

Not only do devout Muslims fast and pray five times during the day, but they donate 25% of their income (zakat) to the poor. Prayer deepens their love for God.

Everyday the roza is broken by eating dates or tasting salt. Muslims, then get together and share 'iftaari' (a snack or a small meal)

I have read that people who pray together, stay together. Sharing a meal creates a bond. So I believe that the month of roza, generates a feeling of brotherhood.

Ramzan Id, also called Id-ul-Fitr comes at the end of the month of fast. It is a thanksgiving celebration after a month of abstinence. The special prayers or namaaz offered on that day is called the kutba

On Id people dress up in new clothes, hug one another, exchange good wishes and enjoy bowls and bowls of Sheerkurma (sweetened milk and vermicelli garnished with nuts).

Bakri Id is a Muslim festival that celebrates the trust of Man in God and an important happening in Islam.

Dear Children, did you know that the great great grandfather of Jesus was Ibrahim?

Ibrahim is known as Khalilullah, which means, a friend of God.

It is believed that Ibrahim had a son very late in life, and Ibrahim loved him dearly.

God wanting to test the faith of Ibrahim, and asked the latter to offer his son Ismail as a sacrifice to him. I am told by an Islamic Scholar, that God did not ask for Ibrahim's son, but for who Ibrahim loved most. Since Ibrahim loved Ismail the most, he decided to offer him as a sacrifice to God.

Ibrahim took his son Ismail to a mountain. Ismail knew what his father was about to do, so Ibrahim blindfolded his father (son), so that the latter would not suffer at the sight of what he was about to do.

After Ibrahim plunged his knife, he removed the piece of cloth around his eyes, and lo and behold, a goat had been sacrificed and his son Ismail stood unharmed!

To remember this occasion, Muslims around the world sacrifice an animal. The animal popularly used is a goat.

The Islamic Scholar explained to me that Islam's message is to feed the poor, not to kill humans and/or animals. Another friend explained to me that the name of Allah is mentioned whenever an animal is killed for food. She wrote: ***WITHOUT UTTERING THE NAME OF ALLAH WHILE AN ANIMAL IS BEING SLAUGHTERED, MUSLIMS MAY NOT EAT ITS FLESH, THUS MAKING IT A SACRED RITUAL, A SORT OF THANKSGIVING FOR BEING PROVIDED WITH SUSTENANCE.***

One must remember that Islam was born in a desert land where vegetables were scarce. My friend also enlightened me on the fact that the Prophet Mohammed's diet consisted mostly of khajur (dates) and jau ki roti.

Id Mubaarak!

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

February

Maha Shivraatri Shivji

Mahashivratri is a Hindu festival dedicated to Shiva, one of the deities of the Hindu Trinity.

Candlemas : It is on this day that Mother Mary took Jesus to the Temple at Jerusalem. The 11th of February St Bernadette had her first vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Our Lady of Lourdes)

Vasant Panchami: . The festival marks the beginning of Spring.

Mahamastakabisheka is a Jain Festival: This festival occurs every 12 years at Shravanabelagola, and involves the head anointing of a huge statue of Bahubali.

Fourfold Assembly or Sangha Day. Marks the day Buddha addressed a meeting of 1250 arahants.

Parinirvana - Nirvana day: Mahayana Buddhist festival marking the anniversary of Buddha's death. Pure Land Buddhists call the festival "Nirvana Day".

Buddhist Magha Puja

Islamic holy day observed on the 10th of the Islamic month of Muharram. Shi'ite Muslims regard it as a major festival marking the martyrdom of the Prophet's grandson, Hussein..

Jewish Tu B'Shevat

The Jewish New Year for trees - For religious accounting purposes all trees have their anniversaries on this festival, regardless of when they were planted.

Tuesday 14 February

**Christian
St Valentine's Day**

Now more a secular festival than a religious one. There are at least three different saints named Valentine.

Nirvana Day is also known as Parinirvana and is celebrated by some Buddhists on February 8th. Nirvana Day is the celebration of Buddha's death when he reached total Nirvana, at the age of 80.

FEBRUARY

Basant Panchami-Onset of Spring

Dear Children,

Basant means Spring and Panchami means the fifth day.

The above Spring Festival is celebrated during February as a celebration of the onset of Spring. Yellow mustard flowers start to bloom. Yellow is also the color of the Sun. The Deities in the temples and women wear shades of yellow on this day. One offers yellow flowers, fresh shoots of sprouting grass symbolizing new life and growth.

Many new projects begin, weddings take place, and one enjoys the strains of the Vasanta Raga...

Baisakhi is devoted to Mother Saraswati (Goddess of Knowledge) and people pray for knowledge.

Books are placed at Mother Saraswati's feet for blessing.

Mother Saraswati holds a pen in one hand: The power to communicate through the written word. The Gayatri Mantra is one of the most well-known invocations to Mother. The Vedas that She holds in Her hand, summon the spirit of brilliant knowledge.

Mother's white saree speaks of Her purity. Her carriage is the swan.

The swan is able to separate water from milk. Great Saints in the Hindu tradition are addressed as 'Param Hans' meaning a great Swan. The reason? Because great sages are able to separate good from bad, truth from falsehood and illusion, true knowledge from ignorance...

Mother Saraswati is called Veena Vaadini. She plays an instrument called Veena which has seven strings.

On either side of the veena there are two hollow rounds.

Maybe those hollow globes save one from drowning in the ocean of difficulties that one encounters in Life.

The parsaad offered to the Goddess are nutrients that increase the potential of the brain. The parsaad (food offering) consists of Misri (sugar) nuts, cardammon, nodes of the bamboo shoot (banslochan) and lotus seeds.

The rosary made of tulsi seeds makes one consistent in the pursuit of knowledge and spirituality.

For the puja of Mother Saraswati: The youngest girl applies a teeka on everyone's forehead. The other devotees then sprinkle water, and other auspicious offerings on Mother Saraswati. Aarti is performed. Parshaad for devotees consists of a few bers, a laddoo, a paan... and good will and cheer.

Shivji-MahaShivratri

Do you know who Shivji is?

Hindus Believe in a Trinity. They are Brahma Vishnu and Mahesh. Brahma created the Universe. Vishnu sustains it. (Looks after it) Shivji destroys it, and helps Brahma to create it again.

Last week was Maha Shivratri. Maha Shivratri is the night on which Shivji and Parvati got married. So, some people stay awake the whole night chanting and praying.

Shivji is called 'Bhola' (innocent) because it is believed that He is easily pleased and grants boons.

Shivji wears the moon like a crown. He is the Lord of Time. (Time was calculated in olden times by the waning and waxing of the moon).

The snakes are Shivji's ornaments. Shivji loves animals! You often see a dancing pose of Shivji. If you have not seen it, ask mummy/daddy to show you.

That pose is called the 'NataRaja', which means the 'Lord of Dance' That dance stands for the Dance of Creation and Destruction. The drum that Shivji holds in His right hand stands for the Heartbeat of the Universe. Shivji's lower right hand is in a blessing posture. It seems to be telling us that we are well protected. Shivji's upper left hand holds 'fire' Fire is an element that stands for Light and Love and God. Shivji's lower left hand points to the foot. He is telling us to rise, when we fall.

Under Shivji's foot there is a demon which is being crushed. The demon could stand for all the bad habits that we have. You see when we do something bad, Shivji does not 'dislike' us. He helps us crush the bad habits! Shivji's throat is blue in color. The reason, for His blue throat, is that Shivji drank the poison, (that would have destroyed the world) which came out of the Ocean, when it was churned. By holding the poison in His throat, He saved the world.

Pray to Shivji, Ask Him for what you like, and say:

Om Namah Shivaaya

He will listen to your prayers.

Jainism

Jaina comes from the word Jina, which means to become victorious and to live.

The Ascetic religious teachers in Jainism are called Tirthankaras.

According to Jain philosophy, all Tirthankaras were born as human beings. Later in life, they achieved enlightenment through meditation and self realization.'

The word 'Tirthankara' loosely translated means: "one who helps, in crossing the river". The sage who renounces the world is called 'the maker of the end', as the sage has jumped off the wheel of the World (Samsara), which makes humanity, bound to constant lives and deaths.

The founder of Jainism was Rishabha.

It is believed that Rishabha invented pottery, painting, sculpture...

The twenty-second Tirthankara, Arishtanemi, is believed to have been a cousin of Krishna.

Parshva was the 23rd Tirthankara. He married a princess and lived an affluent life until he was 30 years of age.

He then, renounced his life as a householder. He underwent 84 days of intense meditation. After he became enlightened, he spread the spiritual message for 70 years.

Parshva's disciples included women. His disciples were allowed to wear garments.

Dear Readers, you will notice that lately, I have been writing to you about various Spiritual Masters with the intention of bringing to your notice, the similarities of their message.

that there is a kind of glue in pleasure. Wetted clay will stick to the wall, while dry clay will fall off!

One must rise above, Let us look at what were the main teachings of Parshva, the 23rd Tirthankara:

Abstaining from harming and killing of living beings.

Truthfulness. The truth must be uttered, after renouncing anger, greed, and fear. However, silence was preferable. But if one must speak, then it should be 'not insulting'.

Not to steal. Begging is practiced adhering to strict rules. Even staying under someone's roof, should be done after deliberation.

Not to own possessions. Also, sensual pleasures, liquor, attachments of any kind, must be renounced by the chaste.

Not to own possessions. Sensual pleasures, liquor, attachments of any kind, must be renounced by the chaste. It was taught attachments to 'likes' and aversion to 'dislikes'

Pain will then, fall off, like the snake casts off its skin, and sins will vanish like the tarnish from silver, in the fire.

Jainism advocates right attitude, right knowledge, and right conduct.

Jain householders tried their best to revere life, by refraining from harming living creatures.

It is recorded, that one of their major arguments was whether monks ought to wear or discard garments.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Buddhism

Dear Children,

Today I am going to tell you about a Prince whose name was Siddhartha.

He lived in the country of Nepal, in the North of India.

For the first part of his young life, he led a life full of joy and luxury.

No shade of unhappiness crossed his path.

Then young Siddhartha saw a very old man.

He was surprised to know, that one day, if he lived long enough, he would become old.

As the prince was coming to terms with that fact, he saw a very ill man.

He asked, those with him, if there was a possibility that he could fall ill one day.

And he was told, that the body goes out of order sometimes.

Then young Siddhartha saw a man who had just died.

All the above experiences made young Siddhartha realize that that even though life was joyful, there was a lot of unhappiness in the world.

At that time, Siddhartha was married to a beautiful young girl, whose name was Yashodara, and had a young son called Rahul.

The prince started to think deeply about why man suffered.

In order to be able to devote more time to his quest, Siddhartha left his kingdom, wife and child and went into the forest.

The prince went through a lot of hardships. Can you imagine a prince who had been born on the midst of luxury, neither having anything to eat, nor a bed to sleep on?

Then young Siddhartha realized that too much of hardship, makes it hard to concentrate, think and/or meditate! Too much of comfort was also not the answer, as then, there are too many distractions.

So, young Siddhaartha figured out, that the best way to live life, was the middle way.

Not too much of luxury, not too much hardships

Not too much food, not too little food

Not too much work, not too little work

Not studying all the time, not playing all the time.

Dear children, don't you think that is the best way to become successful?

Siddhaartha, while following the middle path, continued to look for the meaning of life, and the way to be 'beyond suffering'

One day, he suddenly discovered, what he had been looking for all his life.

Siddhaartha from now on, would become known as 'Gautama Buddha', the Enlightened One.

Buddha returned home and taught his family what he had learned.

But he did not stay home. He had a big responsibility. That responsibility was to teach the world.

Buddha wandered in India, for the next 40 years teaching.

With love Dadi Ma Nani-Ma

JUDAISM

Dear Children,

It is believed by some, that Jesus was born 5 BC.

Do you know, that BC means 'Before Christ'?

Now you could ask me, how Jesus was born 5 years before himself, since Jesus and Christ are names for the same person?

The reason is that in early times, people could not read or write. So whatever the master taught, it was passed on by word of mouth, and the students, had to learn it by heart.

Therefore, the recording of ancient history may not be very accurate.

So, some historians now believe, that Jesus was probably born, 5 years earlier than it is believed that he did.

Jesus was a Jew and what he stated, was very close to what the Jewish Scriptures taught.

The Jewish scriptures describe how God created the world.

The Jews believe that God created the world in 6 days, and rested on the 7th day.

The Jews believe that God created the world in 6 days, and rested on the 7th day.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year falls in September and is regarded as the anniversary of the day that God created the world.

The Celebration begins with a blast of the shofar (ram's horn) to announce that the God who created the world is still the one ruling it.

The custom of tearing clothes was a sign of sorrow for having sinned. However God is more concerned with a change of heart, which means, to stop sinning and to obey the laws of the Lord.

The first prayer that a Jew learns as a child is:

"Shema Yisroel Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad"

Which means: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One"

This prayer, a devout Jew also says, before he dies!

The early Jews were slaves, and were treated badly by their masters.

Moses led the Jews out of Egypt and captivity.

Moses was given the 10 commandments by God.

Some of these commandments of God, urge Jews to honor their parents, not to murder, to remain faithful, speak the truth, not to steal what does not belong to them, and to lead a good life, and perform good deeds (mitzvah) ie, visit the sick, not hurt people's feelings, the study of the scriptures...

Dear children, please note that what God taught the Jews is not different from what your religion teaches you.

Some of the Jews, in time, forgot the commandments, so God sent prophets and messengers to remind the people of the commandments of God.

Today, not only the Jews, but all of us have to remember what God commanded.

And I am trying in a very small way to share with you, what I have learned and feel to be true.

Will you read my words and think about them?

With love,

Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

Muharram

Dear Children,

Today I am going to tell you about 'Muharram'.

I have sent this mail earlier to a few knowledgeable people who confirmed that my information is correct.

According to the tenements of Islam and the Shariat, the Muharram is the beginning of the New Year of Muslims. It is a reminder of the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed. It teaches us to be fearless in the pursuit of justice. The martyrdom of the great soul also teaches us that we must grieve for the loss of wisdom, courage and truth embodied in Hazrat Imam Hussain. Muharram is therefore relevant today, as we are living a life full of hate, dishonesty and greed for power, Hazrat Imam Hussain was a noble soul and led a simple life. He faithfully followed the teachings of Prophet Mohammed. Yazeed was a wicked and power hungry man. If anyone so much as spoke against Yazeed, he would be put to death. Yazeed was responsible for the death of the grandson of the Prophet Mohammed, Hazrat Imam Hussain and his companions.

Yazeed sent an emissary to Hussain demanding that the latter submit to him.

To protect the holy cities of Medina to Mecca from bloodshed, Imam Hussain fled to a neighboring city of Kufa.

The Kufans had promised to support Imam Hussain.

Word came that Yazeed had sent a new governor, with an army that threatened to kill any one who did not submit.

Sadly Kufans submitted.

Hussain, his family and his supporters, a mere seventy two men, along with women and children finally pitched camp at Karbala, close to the city of Kufa which is now Iraq.

Yazeed's governor, Ibn Ziyad, sent an army of 30,000 men against Imam Hussain. They surrounded his camp and then once again, demanded submission from Imam Hussain.

When Imam Hussain's refused to accept him as the ruler **Umar Ibn** was commanded to destroy Hussain or be killed himself.

On the 9th day of Muharram, the camp had exhausted its water and could choose only between surrender and death.

Hussain then told his men that he did not intend to surrender, but to fight.

He told them that if they wished to flee the camp in the middle of the night, rather than face certain death, they were free to do so.

But none of Hussain's men wished to leave him as they knew that he was on the right path.

The next day, Hussain himself addressed the enemy troops.

Inspired by the speech one of Yazeed's great and trusted generals, named Hurr, abandoned Yazeed's army and joined Hussain's small force.

Ibn Sa'ad feared that this might be the first of many defections, therefore hurried to join battle. He shot an arrow towards Hussain.

The women and children were huddled in the tents, waiting for the battle to

end. Husain's son Imam Ali ibn Husayn was there among the women, because he was too ill to fight. Another son, Ali Asghar, was but six months old, and dying due to lack of water.

Hussain took the child in his arms and marched out to face Yazeed's army. He asked for water for the child. But Hurmala ibn Kahil, on orders, shot an arrow at the child. It pierced him in the neck and he died in the arms of his father.

Hussain buried his son and again went out to face the army. Hussain was surrounded and killed, as were all his men.

Imam Hussain's greatest belief and saying was that one should never side with a tyrant. One must be on the side of truth and deny injustice.

The holy shrine of Karbala is a memory to the martyrdom of the great soul. Muharram teaches one to rise against wrong and to pursue the Quest for Justice against the Forces of Oppression.

Some more information (Aboobakar Thwahir)

- 1) Muslims begin their lunar Hijrah calendar with the month of Muharram, one of the four months sanctified by Allah.
- 2) The Prophet has said that the best fast after the fast of Ramadan is during the month of Muharram.
- 3) Lamentations, breast-beating and mourning in memory of Husain's martyrdom are not sanctioned by Islam...

Even Husain, shortly before his demise, had advised his beloved sister Zainab, not to mourn over his death in this manner. He said, "My dear sister! I swear upon you that in case I die you shall not tear your clothes, nor scratch your face, nor curse anyone for me or pray for your death" (Al-Kamil, ibn Kathir, Vol 4, pg 2)

Some more information

Especially Shias begin their month of mourning.

Hazrat Imam Husain, second son of Hazrat Ali and Fatimah, the prophet's daughter was killed at the battle of Karbala, Iraq, on the 10th day of Muharram. Procession of Tazias ornamented models of the tomb of Hazrat Imam Husain are taken out.

Valentine's Day (14th February)

A day dedicated to love

Dear Children,

Most people associate Valentines Day with expressions of their feeling of love.

Also, children celebrate the festival by exchanging gifts and cards with their friends.

There are some who believe the day to be St Valentine's birth date.

It seems that Valentine was a priest who was probably martyred on February 14th in the name of love.

Do you know what a martyr is? He is one who died for a cause (generally a good cause, which has been misunderstood and hence the person is killed)

Valentine lived during the third century in Rome. The festival is associated with another 'Valentine' who was a bishop in Interamna and was martyred in Rome.

Claudius the Goth, the Emperor of Rome determined that unmarried men made better soldiers, and therefore decreed 'marriage' illegal.

Valentine opposed the decree and persisted in solemnizing unions.

When Valentine's secret practice was revealed to the emperor, the latter decided to put Valentine to death.

Valentine fell in love with the jailor's daughter, (who it seems was blind, and whose sight he miraculously restored) while imprisoned and sent the first greeting card to his lady love signed: 'From your Valentine'

Another legend claims that Valentine was an early Christian, who loved children.

Happy Valentine's Day!

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Holi

Prahlad and Holika

I love Krishna.

He was born to Devaki and Vasudev.

He grew up as the son of His foster parents Nanda and Yashoda-Ma.

One can pray to Him, and love Him in so many ways!

He can be a best friend, One, in whom, one can confide, ones most intimate fears and desires.

He is naughty, compassionate, loving and so wise and knowledgeable!

He killed many demons that were troubling mankind.

Krishna promised that He would descend on earth, from time to time, as a human being, to bring back, law and order.

Now that we are living in troubled times, we need to call Him.

Lord Krishna appeared over five thousand years ago, yet one can reach Him at any time.

He is just a prayer away.

Would you like to get to know Him better?

Read on!

You know that God is present everywhere. He is more powerful than the most powerful person on earth. Yet, God comes under the control, of those who love Him very much.

Even though Krishna is God, He was very mischievous and lovable. The Gopis (the ladies of Vrindavan) loved Him a lot. Krishna used to love to play Holi with the gopis of Vrindavan. They would color each other in sheer abandon.

Holi is the Festival of color. That color is the color of love. That is the reason why the Gopis would urge Krishna to color them with such a fast color that it cannot be washed despite repeated washing off.

Holi is connected with the story of Holika. But to introduce you to Holika, I must first tell you the story of Prahlad.

Prahlad was the son of king Hiranyakashyap. Hiranyakashyap, being the king of demons was a staunch enemy of Lord Vishnu. Krishna is another form of Lord Vishnu.

Hiranyakashyap wanted his whole kingdom to worship him as the 'The most powerful king in the Universe' Sadly for Hiranyakashyap, his son Prahlad worshipped Lord Vishnu and refused to acknowledge the supremacy of his father. Prahlad tried to explain to his father to mend his ways, but that angered the king of demons more. Hiranyakashyap tried all means to make Prahlad shift his devotion from Lord Vishnu to himself.

The wicked king pushed young Prahlad from a tall mountain. Lord Vishnu saved the young boy's life. Then, Hiranyakashyap ordered that Prahlad be trampled by elephants. Then, too Prahlad was miraculously saved by God. The king tried many means to stop his son from chanting the Lord's name, but the latter did not succeed.

Hiranyakashyap had a sister whose name was Holika. She had the boon that even if she were to set herself on fire, she would remain unaffected. The king decided that Holika should hold Prahlad on her lap, and enter a bonfire. But, wonder of wonders, even there, God saved Prahlad. The young boy was unaffected, while Holika burnt to ashes! To commemorate the above incident, bonfires are made to symbolize the burning of Holika. The incident reminds us that Truth, Faith and goodness will always prevail, even though one may first have to go through hardships! The above proves that if you truly love God, He is going to do anything to protect you.

Krishna is always close to those who love Him. Speak to Him! He will hear you and protect you, and those you pray for. Will you make it a habit to pray for yourself and those you love before you go to sleep every night?

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani

Krishna Steals Hearts

Krishna used to love butter.

He was naughty but all the Gopis in Vraj loved Him.

You want to know who the Gopis are? They were the ‘Aunties’ that lived in Vraj.

They would stock up butter in their homes and wait for Krishna to come and take away the butter, that they had so lovingly prepared for Him.

It is said that Krishna would steal the butter. Why would God want to steal the butter, when all the butter in the world belongs to Him?

I prefer to believe that butter is soft like the heart and so ‘Butter’ means heart, and that is what God does? Steal your heart and all the wrong things that go on in your mind.

Are you able to understand that?

Well anyways, one day Yashoda Ma got very angry with Krishna and ran after Him. But she could not catch Him. You know why? Because while she was running after Krishna , His back was towards her. And the back stands for all the wrong things. So that means that if you are running after the wrong things in life, you will not be able to catch Krishna.

Yashoda Ma was holding a stick in her hand. Can you catch God with a stick in your hand? No, right? So Yashoda Ma was not able to catch Krishna!

When Yashoda Ma got tired of running, and she dropped the stick, Krishna faced her!

Yashoda Ma was no longer holding a stick, and she was no longer looking at Krishna’s back. So she was able to catch Krishna.

Now she decided to tie Krishna. Krishna allowed himself to be tied because He knew that His mother was tying Him with a rope of love!

But Krishna’s mother loved Him too much, so she told Him not to be naughty again, and steal her heart as otherwise she was not able to concentrate on her house work.

Yashoda Ma untied Krishna! Krishna and His mother hugged each other because they loved each other so very much!

PASSOVER (April)

Another very important Jewish Festival is '*Pesach*'.

Pesach derives its origin from '*passah*' meaning to '*pass over*'

It is celebrated for 8 days.

Pesach is also known as '*Cheruthenu*' (The season of Liberty) and *Hagmatzoth*, the feast of unleavened bread.

When a famine hit Canaan, Jacob and his family settled on the east bank of the Nile. Jacob's descendants grew in number, their condition got worse and they eventually became slaves of the pharaohs for 210 years.

Moses asked the pharaoh to set his people free, but the pharaoh refused.

When 10 plagues hit , the Hebrew slaves were set free.

That is how the 'Passover' came to pass.

Since the slaves left in haste, they were only able to carry unleavened dough.

In the Jewish tradition, the sacredness of mealtimes is stressed.

During the entire week of the Passover, unleavened bread is eaten, known as '*matza*'

The ceremonial meal consists of: Leaf of parsley dipped in salty water and horse radish

It symbolizes: Spring and new life dipped in tears. The horse radish stands for the bitterness of slavery.

There is a special cup filled with wine for Prophet Elijah, who Jews believe visits every home and brings with him, happy tidings.

Jews believe that when one enjoys the good things in life, one remembers that they belong to God. One recognizes that everything is linked to His presence.

JHULELAL

Dear Children,

Today I shall tell you, the name of the Patron Saint that Sindhis pray to.

Sindhis worship 'Jhulelal'.

His story is based on some historical events. A lot has come down to us by word of mouth. What is important to remember, is that He taught that all religions give out the same message of love and unity.

One astrologer called the child 'Amarlal' (Amar means 'deathless') and claimed that his memory would be immortal as his name suggested. Once while the child lay on his cradle, it started to swing of its own accord, hence the child was also called 'Julelal' which means one who swings to and fro. The Divine child was born on 'Cheti Chand' to Devaki and Rattanchand of Nasarpur. Upon opening the baby's mouth, the parents 'saw' the River Sindhu flowing, and an old man with a white beard sitting on a 'pala' fish, whose peculiarity is, that it swims against the tide.

Jhulelal's mother died soon and his father remarried.

Udero's (Jhulelal) step mother once gave Jhulelal some boiled beans to sell in the market. Jhulelal instead of going to market, went to the banks of Sindhu. Half of the contents he distributed free among the beggars who lived on the river bank. The other half, he offered to the Sindhu River. In the evening the same container came from the waters towards him. The container was full with fine quality of rice.

When the step mother started getting the fine quality of rice every day, she got suspicious. One day she sent Ratanchand after Jhulelal. Ratanchand followed Jhulelal discreetly all the day and witnessed the miracle. He bowed to Jhulelal from a distance and accepted either as the God Himself or his Messenger.

During the 10th century, Sindh was ruled by the Sumras, who were good leaders.

But there was one exception, whose name was 'Mirkshah'

Mirkshah decided to deputy one of his ministers name Ahirio to Nassarpur to see and gauge things for himself.

Ahirio took a rose dipped in deadly poison and asked Ratanchand to take him to the new born baby. Ahirio had never seen such a charming baby. He hesitated at first, but soon extended the flower to the baby's lips. Jhulelal smiled knowingly and blew the flower in one breath. The flower flew out of Ahirio's hand. Then Ahirio saw that the child was no more in the cradle. Instead, an old man with white long beard was staring at him! All of a sudden the old man turned into a youngster of sixteen years! Again he saw Jhulelal on a horseback with a blazing naked sword in his hand and there were rows of warriors behind him. It was a scene of battle field. A cold shiver passed through the body of Ahirio bowed reverently.

Jhulelal was born during difficult times.

Mirkshah tried various means to do away with Jhulelal but the latter was always saved by miraculous interventions.

When Mirkshah finally confronted Jhulelal, he 'heard' a sermon which proclaimed that the whole of Creation was created by only One God, who Muslims called 'Allah' and Hindus 'Ishwar'. Jhulelal promised to come to the aid of his devotees whenever he would be called upon.

Everyone then understood once and for all that Jhulelal, the Water-God, was a holy man and as such he should be respected by Hindus as well as Muslims.

Some believe that Ahirio proclaimed at the top of his voice that Khwaja Khizr swam the Sindhu against tide and rested on an island near Rohri!

The world is passing through a stormy time, once again.

Shall we remember to call upon Jhulelal, specially, this 'Cheti-chand'. (Sindhi New Year)?

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Mahavira

Mahavira was born in Kundapura near Vaishali. He was born as a prince, in Bihar. The traditional Jaina date for Mahavira's birth is 599 BC

Lord Mahavir was the twenty-fourth and the last Tirthankara of the Jain religion. He was a reformer. He propagated Jainism, as taught by his predecessors.

The following, is a legend which is narrated in the *Acharanga Sutra* and in the *Kalpa Sutra*.

Mahavira was conceived in the womb of Devananda, who had fourteen prophetic dreams. These fourteen dreams, were meant to specify that the child would become either an emperor or a great Spiritual Soul.

Mahavira was, soon after, divinely transferred to the womb of Trishala, who also had the same fourteen prophetic dreams.

Note, how similar it is to the story about how, Krishna's brother Balarama, was transferred, to the womb of Rohini from the womb of Devaki.

To return to the life story of Mahavira, while the latter was in the womb of his mother, the wealth of the parent household increased. Hence the divine child was called Vardhamana.

Young Vardhamana was brave. He not only mounted a charging elephant, but also picked up a large snake. Later as an ascetic, Vardhamana's control of senses during the penance, that he endured, was exemplary. No wonder, that Vardhamana came to be known as Mahavira. (One who is courageous, One of great strength)

The father of Mahavira was King Siddartha

Mahavira married a princess named Yasoda, and they had a daughter, who was named Anoja.

At the age of thirty Mahavira renounced his kingdom, and family.

It is believed that Mahavira did not partake of, even water, for two days.

Mahavira pulled out his hair and put on a piece of cloth. He later, gave half of that garment to a beggar. After, a little over a year, he gave up clothes altogether.

Mahavira's renunciation was so great that he allowed, the cattle, to eat the grass on the thatched roof, of his hut, when the grass in the forest had been destroyed, because of intense heat.

Severe austerities practiced by Mahavira:

- 1) In the summer meditation under the rays of the sun or a walk through sun-baked fields.
- 2) During the chilly days of winter, he would meditate naked, in the open fields.
- 3) Stand in a statue-like posture.
- 4) Maintain silence.
- 5) Use his hands as a dish.
- 6) He walked carefully, so as to avoid stepping on any insects.
- 7) He stayed in crematoriums and deserted places.
- 8) Mahavira's fasts at times, extended up to, two months.

The power of endurance of Mahavira was tremendous. Yet his religion did not advocate complicated ritual practices.

His message of nonviolence (Ahimsa), truth (Satya), non-stealing (Achaurya), celibacy (Brahma-charya), and non-possession (Aparigraha) is full of universal compassion.

He taught about the internal beauty and harmony of the soul.

When Mahavira's endurance was tested by being inflicted with unbearable physical pain, and having his food contaminated, Mahavira renounced begging and sat in meditation, without so much as a murmur. The torture continued for 6 more months.

Mahavira remained peaceful, when a cowherd pushed grass sticks into his ears!

Mahavira preached that right faith (samyak-darshana), right knowledge (samyak-jnana), and right conduct (samyak-charitra) together will lead one towards liberation.

"A living body does not only consist of limbs and flesh but it is the abode of the soul which encompasses perfect perception (Anant-darshana), perfect knowledge (Anant-jnana), perfect power (Anant-virya), and perfect bliss (Anant-sukha)." Lord Mahavir preached the gospel of universal love.

Mahavira achieved Enlightenment (kevala-jnana) on the 13th year of His ascetic life, and gave up His body, at the age of 72 years.

On the night of his salvation, people celebrated the Festival of Lights (Dipavali) in his honor.

Zoroaster

Zoroaster, or one may call Him, Zarathustra, was the founder of Zoroastrianism.

Zoroaster paved the Path of Discipline, Truth and Progress.

In India, Zoroastrianism is followed by the Parsis

Zoroaster was a philosopher, astrologer and healer par excellence.

He believed in One God, Who He called Ahura Mazda.

‘Ahura’ means ‘Lord of Life’ and ‘Mazda’ means ‘All knowing’

The Zoroastrian scriptures consist of the Avesta, the Gathas (older hymns), the Middle Persian Pahlavi Books.

The date of Zoroaster's life cannot be ascertained. Zoroastrian tradition states that, he lived 258 years before Alexander. After considerable calculations, one can speculate that Zoroaster's birthdate was on 628 BC.

It is believed that nature rejoiced at His birth.

Zoroaster was born, in what is now, a suburb of Teheran.

Zoroaster could have been a priest. He received a vision from the Lord, who He called Ahura Mazda. The Lord urged Zoroaster to preach the truth.

The Gathas are Divine songs, which reflect, Zoroaster's communication with Ahura Mazda.

The Religious Authorities of the times of Zoroaster believed in many gods.

Zoroaster did not conform to the teachings of the religious authorities that belonged to His times. However He did not bring them down altogether.

He gave the most important position to Ahura Mazda, as the Highest God, who could bestow bliss and immortality.

Zoroaster's teachings, angered those, whom he called the followers of the Lie (dregvant).

Zoroaster taught that the Good Lord has an opponent, whose name is Ahriman. The latter embodies the principle of evil, and those who followed Ahriman, were followers of the lie, in other words, were evil.

Zoroaster taught that in the beginning, spirits were given the right to choose: “life or not life” Thus was born: good and evil.

Zoroaster believed that Ahura Mazda reigned over both.

There was Heaven awaiting the good ones, and a hell awaiting the evil ones.

Eventually, Ahriman will be destroyed, and in the world, there will only be good, and all will live in perfect bliss.

Zoroaster's concept of God:

- 1) Ahura Mazda, was the highest God, worthy of being worshipped, sovereign law provider, who could bestow bliss and immortality.
- 2) According to the Gathas: Ahura Mazda created Heaven and earth, night and day
- 3) The Wise Lord, together with the Amesha Spentas, (6 or 7 Beneficent Immortals.) will vanquish the spirit of evil.

The sacrificing of cattle accompanied by the consumption of intoxicating drinks was prevalent during the times of Zoroaster.

The eternal flame in the Temple of fire continues to spread light and good will in the place of Parsi worship.

Zoroaster lived for 77 years.

Some believe that He preached to many nations and fought in a sacred war.

Between the 8th and 10th centuries religious persecution led some of the Zoroastrians to leave Iran and settle in India, most of them, in the region of Bombay.

In the 19th century the Parsees renewed contact with the remaining Zoroastrians in Iran, the Gabars.

Parsis, are distinguished for their wealth and education. I have heard a story, that when the Parsees came to India, they promised to mingle with the inhabitants, like sugar does with milk.

I believe that they have kept their promise. Besides the last quality, mentioned about them, Parsis are known for their wealth, education and humanitarian values.

With love,

Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

RAMZAN and BAKRI ID

Dear children,

Ramzan is the only month in the Muslim calendar which is specially mentioned in the Holy Koran. It is during this month that devout Muslims fast and pray, for a month. They do not eat or drink anything between sunrise and sunset, dawn and dusk. This is known as the Roza.

Not only do devout Muslims fast and pray five times during the day, but they donate 25% of their income (zakat) to the poor. Prayer deepens their love for God.

Everyday the roza is broken by eating dates or tasting salt. Muslims, then get together and share 'iftaari' (a snack or a small meal)

I have read that people who pray together, stay together. Sharing a meal creates a bond. So I believe that the month of roza, generates a feeling of brotherhood.

Ramzan Id, also called Id-ul-Fitr comes at the end of the month of fast. It is a thanksgiving celebration after a month of abstinence. The special prayers or namaaz offered on that day is called the kutba

On Id people dress up in new clothes, hug one another, exchange good wishes and enjoy bowls and bowls of Sheerkurma (sweetened milk and vermicelli garnished with nuts).

Bakri Id is a Muslim festival that celebrates the trust of Man in God and an important happening in Islam.

Dear Children, did you know that the great great grandfather of Jesus was Ibrahim?

Ibrahim is known as Khalilullah, which means, a friend of God.

It is believed that Ibrahim had a son very late in life, and Ibrahim loved him dearly.

God wanting to test the faith of Ibrahim, and asked the latter to offer his son Ismail as a sacrifice to him. I am told by an Islamic Scholar, that God did not ask for Ibrahim's son, but for who Ibrahim loved most. Since Ibrahim loved Ismail the most, he decided to offer him as a sacrifice to God.

Ibrahim took his son Ismail to a mountain. Ismail knew what his father was about to do, so Ibrahim blindfolded his father (son), so that the latter would not suffer at the sight of what he was about to do.

After Ibrahim plunged his knife, he removed the piece of cloth around his eyes, and lo and behold, a goat had been sacrificed and his son Ismail stood unharmed!

To remember this occasion, Muslims around the world sacrifice an animal. The animal popularly used is a goat.

The Islamic Scholar explained to me that Islam's message is to feed the poor, not to kill humans and/or animals. Another friend explained to me that the name of Allah is mentioned whenever an animal is killed for food. She wrote: **WITHOUT UTTERING THE NAME OF ALLAH WHILE AN ANIMAL IS BEING SLAUGHTERED, MUSLIMS MAY NOT EAT ITS FLESH, THUS MAKING IT A SACRED RITUAL, A SORT OF THANKSGIVING FOR BEING PROVIDED WITH SUSTENANCE.**

One must remember that Islam was born in a desert land where vegetables were scarce. My friend also enlightened me on the fact that the Prophet Mohammed's diet consisted mostly of khajur (dates) and jau ki roti.

Id Mubaarak!

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

GUDI PADWA

Dear Children,

Every moment of Gudi Padva day is considered auspicious.

It is believed that on this day, Brahma created the Universe and the Golden Age of Truth began.

Did you know that the 'Gudi' consists of a wooden stick and a steel 'loti'?

The wooden stick and the loti symbolizes a flag post.

This flag-post in turn symbolizes the Victory of Shree Ram over the Demon King Ravana, and is erected in homes as a mark of triumph of good over evil.

A bitter-sweet mixture of neem leaves, jaggery and jeera is consumed early in the morning.

The ladies dress in their traditional, beautiful clothes, purchase golden items, adorn their homes with orange flowers and jubilantly usher in peace and harmony on this, their new year day.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Easter Sunday

Dear Children,

On Easter Sunday, Christians, the world over celebrate Jesus Christ's Ascension.

Let me explain to you what 'Ascension' means.

To 'ascend', means 'to rise'

Jesus was nailed to the cross. He died. But he rose from the dead, and ascended to Heaven in full view of many, who loved him.

Jesus proved to us that Life is stronger than Death.

And Jesus said that all the miracles that he performed, we could too.

You will tell me that Jesus could do that because he was the son of God.

But so, dear children, are all of us, children of God, I mean.

Jesus also said that all one required to perform miracles, is faith.

Do we have faith?

We must begin, by having faith in ourselves.

Believe that you are lovable and capable and that you will fulfill your dreams.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Tulsidas and the Ramayana

The Ramayana was originally written by Sage Valmiki.

The story of [Rama and Seeta](#) was very popular during Tulsidas' time.

Tulsidasji sang the Valmiki Ramayana to large gatherings of people.

However he soon realized that the people could not appreciate the beauty of the Valmiki Ramayana because it was in Sanskrit.

Tulsidasji decided to rewrite the Ramayana in the spoken language.

The Ram-Charit-Maanas is the title that he gave to the new version of the Ramayana that flowed from the depths of his heart.

The original Sanskrit version of the Ramayana had 60,000 verses.

Whereas the Ram-Charit-Maanas consists of 30,000.

The people became jealous of Tulsidasji.

They started to criticize him for tampering with the original version of the Ramayana.

Some of them said that Tulsidas should be stopped immediately from committing such 'grave trespasses'

At first the cruel remarks of his people hurt Tulsidas.

He could not work, because he would be disturbed about what people were saying about him.

But do you think that he stopped writing because of that?

Don't ever believe it, if people tell you that you are dumb or stupid.

Tulsidas continued to sit on his desk everyday and he continued to write.

Soon, Tulsidas realized that God lives in everyone's heart.

Therefore, how could Tulsidas think ill of those who tormented him?

Dear Children, do you think that you can start to think like this?

This is the way great people think!

The mind of Tulsidas started to calm down.

Before Tulsidas started to write; every morning, he would bow in respect to all, whether they were his friends or enemies, because he started to experience the same spark of God in everyone present.

Soon the Ram-Charit-Maanas was completed, and until this day people sing it with great devotion and the genius of Tulsidas is held in high esteem.

The Story of Rama and Seeta

DASHARATHA

Many years ago there lived in India, a king called Dasharatha.

He was a very good king, but he was very unhappy because he had no children.

So he prayed and prayed until God granted him 4 sons.

King Dasharatha had three queens.

The eldest Queen Kaushalaya became the mother of Rama.

Queen Kaikeyee became the mother of Bharat.

Queen Sumitra became the mother of twins, Shatrughna and Laxman.

SEETA

Seeta was a beautiful princess.

Her father, King Janak, wanted a husband for Seeta worthy of her good qualities and beauty. Therefore the king invited suitors to his court.

King Janak promised that he would give Seeta in marriage to one, who could pick up, string and break a very heavy Bow.

Sri Rama married Seeta after succeeding at picking and breaking the heavy bow.

KAIKEYEE

Now let me tell you about Queen Kaikeyee.

I already told you that she was one of the queens of King Dasharatha, who was Ram's father.

Queen Kaikeyee had saved King Dasharatha's life.

The King urged Kaikeyee to ask for anything that she desired in return.

Kaikeyee however said, that she would ask for what she wanted, when the time was right.

RAMA'S CORONATION

After Rama completed his education, the time came that he should be crowned king.

Everyone in the kingdom was very happy as Rama was very capable.

However, at that time Kaikayee decided to ask Dasharatha that her wishes be granted.

She asked king Dasharatha that her son Bharat should be crowned king instead of Rama.

She also asked that Rama should be banished to the forest for 14 years.

King Dasharatha was very unhappy, but Rama told his father that he must keep his promise. So Rama, along with his wife Seeta and brother Laxman left for the forest.

In the forest Seeta was kidnapped by a demon king called Ravana.

Rama urged Raavana to return Seeta unharmed.

But Raavana refused.

Rama with the help of Hanuman, the monkey God and his army, marched against Raavana, who lived in the golden city of Lanka.

After a very fierce battle, Raavana was defeated.

The defeat of Raavana is celebrated in India as Dassera.

Seeta was safe with Rama.

They both returned to their kingdom after 14 years and reigned for a very very long time.

Rama and Seeta's triumphant homecoming is celebrated as Diwali.

Shravan Kumar

Dear children,

I have already told you the Ramayana in short.

Now I would like to introduce to you, some of the great characters, that play a very important role in the Ramayana.

Long long ago there lived a very good boy whose name was Shravan Kumar.

Shravan Kumar was a very devoted son.

He loved his mummy and daddy very much.

Unfortunately his parents were blind and old.

The mother and father of young Shravan Kumar wanted to go on a pilgrimage.

So, Shravan Kumar made them sit on baskets and carried them.

One day, the old mother and father felt thirsty, so young Shravan Kumar went looking for water in the forest.

Now in that same forest, King Dashratha, was out on a hunting spree.

He was so proficient in the art; that he could aim, at his target, only by hearing a sound.

As he heard the sound of someone, maybe drinking water, King Dashratha thought that the sound was coming from the act of a deer, drinking water. So, he fired.

I think, you have guessed right.

By mistake King Dashratha's arrow hit Shravan Kumar.

The boy died.

King Dashratha was very sad at what had happened.

You might say that it was not his fault as he did not know who he was firing at.

But don't you think that he should have been more careful!

King Dashratha repented for his hasty action, but the old parents cursed him.

They prophesied that King Dashratha would give up his life pining for his son, just like the two old helpless people were about to do.

I sent you the story of the Ramayana last time, did you read it?

If you did, then I would like to tell you that King Dashratha died pining for his son Rama when the latter was banished to the forest for 14 long years through no fault of his.

But also I would like to tell you that when King Dashratha asked Shravan Kumar what the king could do for him; Shravan's last wish was that the king should take water for his thirsty parents.

You know children, Shravan Kumar is remembered today, as one of the best sons ever born!

Hanuman

Dear children,

Do you remember the story of [Shree Rama and Seeta?](#)

Just to remind you, Shree Rama was a king and Seeta was his queen.

We believe that Shree Rama is an incarnation of God.

Seeta is an incarnation of a Goddess.

Incarnation means, when God takes birth on earth in a human form.

Once, while Shree Rama and Seeta were in a forest, Seeta was kidnapped by a demon called Raavan.

Shree Rama urged Raavana to return Seeta unharmed.

But Raavana refused.

Shree Rama with the help of Hanuman, the monkey God and his army, marched against Raavana, who lived in the golden city of Lanka.

After a very fierce battle, Raavana was defeated.

The above story in detail, is called the Ramaayana.

Hanuman is one of the most colorful characters in the Ramaayana.

He truly loved Shree Rama and Seeta and wanted nothing in return for his service.

Seeta gave him very valuable pearls as a gift for all the service that Hanuman had rendered. Hanumanji bit the pearls and said that Shree Rama and Seeta were not seen in them. Therefore, he threw the valuable pearls away.

If you notice, you will find that Hanuman is red in color.

Let me tell you the reason.

Seeta would apply a red color dot on her forehead.

Hanuman asked her the reason for this practice.

Seeta answered that she wore the red colored dot on her forehead as it pleased her husband Shree Rama.

Since Hanuman's main objective was to please Shree Rama, he decided to dye himself into a red color by dipping himself into a red solution.

Shree Rama heard about what Hanuman had done, because of his love for Shree Rama. Shree Rama was overcome with the emotion of love, and his eyes filled up with tears

If you want to pray to Shree Rama for something it would be a good idea if you asked Hanuman for it. I believe that Shree Rama finds it very hard to refuse Hanumanji, if he places your wish at Shree Rama's feet.

Hanuman Crosses The Ocean

Dear Children,

Today I am going to tell you about the adventures that Hanuman encountered when he flew over the ocean.

Sita was abducted by a demon called Ravan. In order to get to Lanka, where Sita was held prisoner by Ravan, it was necessary to cross the ocean. There were no airplanes during those times, so someone had to literally fly. To accomplish such a feat, everyone felt that only Hanuman was capable.

It is said that when Hanuman was about to cross the ocean he became big in stature. To be big, does not only mean to be tall or stout. To be big also means to be wise, brave and courageous to be able to perform such a difficult task. Though big, Hanuman was light in weight. To be light does not only mean that he was thin and light in weight. What it means is that though Hanuman was so clever and brave, he had no ego and false pride. As Hanuman crossed over the ocean different demons came across his path. These demons that crossed the path of Hanuman, are like the obstacles that one comes across when one wants to do something good. Let me give you an example. Suppose you really want to study, and a friend comes and tells you, to come out and play with him. It is best to say to that friend that you will play with him after you complete your homework. Let us see what Hanuman did.

Hanuman first flew over a golden mountain. The lord of the golden mountain asked Hanuman to rest, before he continued the journey. The golden mountain is like the friend who asked you to play before studying. Hanuman did not want to rest even on a golden mountain before his mission was completed, that is before he got to Sita. Hanuman won over the first tempting encounter.

Hanuman's next encounter was with a demon who wanted to swallow him. However just as the demon's mouth opened, Hanuman became larger than the mouth. This demon is like the friend who teases you when you want to study, instead of playing, by calling you a goody goody. Becoming larger than the demon's mouth, means that you do not get intimidated by, or afraid of such bullies.

The third encounter of Hanuman was with a demon who lived in the ocean. This demon attacked the shadows of her victims. She was only interested in attacking those who flew high. This demon stands for jealousy.

You know children, when someone is more clever than you, or has better things than you do, you tend to become jealous of them. That jealousy you must stop, by shouting 'NO!' to it. Let us see what Hanuman did! Hanuman killed this adversary with a mighty blow. The only solution to an encounter with jealousy is to kill it

Hanuman moved ahead undaunted by perils. He had defeated each enemy he had encountered on the way. He had not succumbed to temptation, he had not cowed under criticism, had not been influenced by controversies and had not given in to jealousy. All Hanuman wanted was to accomplish the task entrusted to him. He wanted to get to Sita. Are you as determined as Hanuman to achieve your goal? That goal could be to excel in your studies, or to be very good in sports or music, or whatever good thing your heart desires. Hanuman teaches us that one can achieve ones goal, but one must have discipline and one must continue to try, to the best of ones capacity. Then flying over the ocean (achieving our goal) will become easy for us!

June/July

During June, Jews celebrate the 'Festival of Weeks' (Shavuot)
It is during the above festival that the first harvest was taken to the temple.

Guru And Teacher

Dear Children,

During July we celebrate Guru Poornima, which in other words you may call 'Teacher's day'

A 'Guru' is a 'teacher'. But yet it is different. A teacher makes you learn various subjects. She could teach you to read, write, play an instrument, sing, dance etc. A guru teaches you about how to understand what is written in the Spiritual books. She also helps in making you a good person and teaches you how to live your life in the best possible spiritual way.

Sometimes the guru gives you a 'mantra', which you should chant. It is a 'mantra' that is best suited to your personality.

Because the 'Guru' introduces you to God, the Hindus place him on a very high pedestal. 'Placing the guru on a high pedestal' means that the Guru is given a very high position. Since the Guru becomes the means by which one aspires to attain the Lord, it is not uncommon for the Hindu to treat God and the Guru as one.

Do you know who the greatest Guru, is for a child? **Parents!**

Are they not always telling us to speak the truth and to be polite and to be kind?

Guru Nanak was the 1st Guru of the Sikhs and Guru Gobind Singh the 10th one.

The disciples of Guru Gobind Singh were very sad when the Guru was about to leave the body, (you know children, for great personalities, we never say, that they 'die' because they continue to live in Heaven in a brand new body)...So, as I was saying, the disciples were very sad and they asked the Guru, Who would guide them to find God, when Guru Gobind Singh was gone?

Guru Gobind Singh replied that the Great Book of the Sikhs: The Guru Granth Sahib, would become like a Living Guru for the disciples. The Guru said that whenever they were troubled, or they missed him, they could open and read the Guru Granth Sahib, and the answer would be revealed to them.

The Guru Granth Sahib (The Guru in the book form) has since been regarded as the Living Guru, for the Sikhs.

When Krishna was about to leave the body, his friend Udhro was very unhappy. Udhro told Krishna that he would miss the physical presence of Krishna very very much.

Krishna told his dear friend Udhro that He would continue to live in the form of the Great Hindu Book: 'The Srimad Bhaagvad'

Gur-Poornima is the day on which one expresses ones gratitude to ones Guru. The syllable 'Gu' means darkness, the syllable 'Ru' means 'Remover'--So the word 'Guru' would mean 'the one who removes the darkness of ignorance.' According to another

interpretation 'Guru' means the 'weighty one'. It means that the guru is heavy with wisdom and learning and ever ready to pour to the thirsty.

One must remember that the Scriptures ask us to use our mind and intellect before making any commitment, even if it is to ones Guru. One can also be ones own 'Guru' but that would be difficult. It would be like finding ones way through a jungle without the help of a guide.

Let me give you an example that you might understand. Would it not be difficult to pass your school examinations without the help of a school and/or tuition teacher?

Until one decides to make a commitment, ones Guru may be a parent, a friend or 'The Guru Granth' (The Book of the Guru). A Guru Granth may also be the Geeta, The Bible or the Koran.

This month let me introduce you to Great Spiritual teachers/Saints/Personalities.

THUS

SPAKE

THE MASTERS

Moses

Dear Children,

Do you know that Moses is considered a prophet amongst the Jews, Christians, Muslims and Bahais.

Do you know who the Bahais are?

Bahais believe and strive for the Unity of Mankind.

To come back to the story of Moses, Moses was born much before Jesus Christ.

He was born when an Egyptian Pharaoh had decreed that all male children born to Hebrew slaves should be killed.

Jochebed had a son, and she kept him hidden for three months. When she could no longer hide him, rather than have the child killed, she set the baby adrift on the Nile river.

The daughter of Pharaoh discovered the baby and adopted him as her son, and named him Moses.

When Moses grew up, he wanted to know how his people, who were slaves were faring. Moses killed an Egyptian who was mistreating a Hebrew.

The pharaoh would have killed Moses had he not escaped to the Sinai peninsula. Moses sojourned for forty years as a shepherd.

One day, as Moses led his flock, he saw a burning bush.

God then spoke to Moses from the bush, and commissioned him to go to Egypt and deliver his fellow Hebrews from their bondage.

It was very difficult to persuade Pharaoh to let the Hebrews free.

God, then sent ten plagues upon the Egyptians. The Egyptians were so frightened that they ordered the Hebrews to leave.

When God freed the Israelites the latter were very happy at first but they had to cross a barren desert where there was very little water or food.

God performed many miracles through Moses. Once the latter hit the rock with a staff and sweet water poured out.

Moses was given 10 commandments by God which are still laws today, and you know dear children, those laws are common to many religions.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

KABIR

Kabir lived in North India.

He was a weaver of cotton cloth.

He loved God and believed that all religions taught the same truth.

The teachings common to all religions are that, everyone needs to be loving, helpful and honest.

Kabir lived a simple and truthful life. He became famous, and rich people came to meet and hear him. Yet he did not change his simple lifestyle.

One does not have to own fancy clothes and flashy cars to be liked and loved and become popular.

Once a young student called Harish came to meet Kabir. The student knew a lot and so was obnoxiously proud of the knowledge that he possessed. Everyone praised him for his learning, and so he acted like he knew it all, and there was nothing left for him to know.

This student was sent to Kabir, because Harish's teacher felt that Harish required a balance in his life.

Kabir tried to teach him, but to no avail.

One day Kabir asked his wife Lohi to bring something to drink for the young student.

Kabir's wife Lohi brought some buttermilk.

Kabir picked up the pitcher and started to pour the buttermilk into a glass.

Kabir continued to pour until the buttermilk began to overflow and spill on to the floor.

Harish could not contain himself any longer, and he asked Kabir why he was wasting and spilling the buttermilk?

Kabir smiled and said that just like the glass was full, so was the mind of Harish, with false pride, and the idea that there was nothing left for him, to learn.

Kabir lovingly told Harish that the latter was a brilliant student, and that he was loved dearly, but he had to empty his mind of unnecessary and wrong ideas before, his mind could be filled with the right kind of knowledge.

You know children, we Indians are taught to take a clean vessel to God, so that He can fill it up with the things that He would like us to have, and so that whatever is poured in it does not get polluted.

Do you know what I mean by a clean vessel? You guessed right. A clean and honest mind ready to learn, what God is wanting to teach us.

The Khalsa and Vahguru

Dear Children,

A few weeks ago I met a Sikh scholar. He told me that once Guru Nanak was asked by the Hindus, whom they should worship as there were over 2000 Deities. Guru Nanak said that one word would be enough to worship all. Thus Vahguru was coined:

V for Vasudev
H for Hari
G for Gopal
R for Ram

I am told that 24,945 words in the Guru Granth Sahib are associated with the word: Ram 5,995 words are associated with the word 'Hari' I feel so happy when I realize these wonderful Masters gave so much respect to names of Gods. After all they knew that they are different names of the same Creator.

I am a Sindhi and Sindhis worship Guru Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Granth Sahib is the sacred book of the Sikhs. The following information may seem a little difficult to understand at first, but if you read it again, I am sure that you will understand as you are smart children.

Being a Sindhi I am familiar with the term: '*Raj karega Khaalsa, baaki rahe na koye*' I always wondered how a religion of as wonderful as Sikhism could claim, that only Sikhism would reign, and the rest would perish. A little while ago, I met a Sikh scholar who interpreted it thus:

It is not '*bakee rahe na koye*' which means 'none other will remain' But '*aakee rahe na koye*' which means: 'There will remain no non-believers' (*aakee* means 'non believers') Let us come to the term 'Khalsa' The common version translates the term 'Khalsa' as 'Pure'

In which case, the whole phrase would mean: The 'Pure Ones' will reign, there will remain no 'non believers'

There is another meaning attributed to Khalsa. Khal-sa is a Persian word.

In Ancient Persia there were 2 kinds of agricultural land. One 'land' on which revenue was charged. The other 'land' was called 'Khal-sa' On the above land no revenue was charged; therefore, the king could usurp this land, in times of crisis. Guru Govind Singh was a Persian scholar, and therefore it is believed that he gave the title: 'Khal-sa' to those of his followers, who were keen to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the guru.

Those to whom Guru Govind Singh gave the title of Khalsa, he called:

Meri jaan ki jaan (Life of my life)
Akaal Purukh kee fauj (God's own army)
Khalsa mera roop hai khaas
Khalse mein main karoон nivaas
Khalsa is my very form, in whom I reside.

SHIRDI SAIN BABA

Dear children,

I used to go to Shirdi as a young teenager. I have had the good fortune of having had a picture taken with Laxmibai, holding her prized nine silver coins, given to her, by none other than Sai Baba himself.

Much later, I started to write the 'Dadi Nani ki Kahaani' stories.

I was asked by a reader why I had not written about the revered saint.

I had no idea why I had not.

Now, I think I know.

I was waiting for the wonderful book: Spiritual Masters 'SAI BABA' written by Sonavi Desai to reach my hands.

The above book is a collection of stories, portrayed through the eyes of Laxmibai, one of Sai Baba's closest devotees, and to whom Baba gifted the silver coins that I have mentioned earlier.

Let me tell you Baba's story:

The story of Baba's birth remains shrouded in mystery. But it is believed that he was born in a Hindu Brahmin family and that when he was eight years old, he was taken away by a Sufi Fakir (holy man of Muslim Faith)

Baba spent most of his time in a Masjid (mosque) and called it Dwarkamai!(Mother Dwarka, the home of Lord Krishna)

Mostly everyone who knows Baba, is aware that Baba came to Shirdi, accompanying Chand Patil, whose sister was to be married to a boy in Shirdi.

What a lot of people may not know is that, Baba predicted accurately, where Chand Patil's lost mare was.

Chand Patil watched in amazement, as Baba hit the ground, and out came a spurt of water. Sai thrust a pair of tongs into the ground, and drew out a burning ember...

Various were the miracles that Baba performed, but they were not performed to impress.

What others would describe as miracles, came naturally to him.

Baba lit lamps with the aid of water instead of oil, much to the delight of the local children. Dropping some leaves with some blessed food, into a dry well, Baba made the water in it, overflow. And the celebration of the birth of Sri Rama during Ramnaomi, was not cancelled.

Baba lit a fire, that until today burns constantly, in Dwarkamai. The udi (ash), that comes out, is known to have cured many ailments.

When Baba was asked, what power the ‘udi’ possessed, he answered: ‘The power of faith!’

There are many miraculous and touching stories of the faith, of his devotees, when they used the ‘udi’ that Baba gave them.

Baba would often say that he was one with all living creatures. Thus, Baba would state, that, if one fed a beggar, dog, pig or even an insect, he (Baba) would receive the nourishment.

Baba taught that God is everything. He is perfect infinite and eternal. He is the one who creates, He is the One who protects and He is the One who destroys. He is all pervasive. He just Is. One must seek Him within Oneself and in every form of Creation. One must only develop the ability to recognize Him.

Baba said that One was not required to be very knowledgeable or highly intellectual to recognize the Lord. In fact, He said: “The simpler the mind, the easier it is to find God. Entrust your mind to the Guru. Let him be your guide on this journey. And you shall find God. All you need is Patience (Saburi) and Faith (Shraddha). It’s simple really.”

Dear children, take a moment to ponder, on what Baba said, and take the first step towards him.

A SAINT FROM SINDH

BHAGAT KANWAR RAM

I received an email from my friend Asha Chand who informed me about a news item in Sindhi Daily Ibrat:

An estimated 5,000 people gathered in Ruku Railway Station to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the martyrdom of Sant Bhagat Kanwar Ram. Over 5,000 deeyas (earthen lamps) were lit...

The news item touched my heart and I decided to get some more information about this great Saint of Sindh:

I am about to share the saint's 'life' with you.

Bhagat Kanwar Ram was born in small village called (Ddaherki) Jarvaran Taluka Mirpur Mathelo, District Sukkur, in 1885 A.D.

Sant Kanwar Ram was not only popular amongst the Sindhi Hindus but also with the Muslims.

His father, Tarachand, who had a shop of general merchandise, entrusted him to the care and tutelage of his Guru-Saint Satramdas.

Sometimes, Kanwar Ram would help his father and brother in the shop, and sometimes he would till the land.

However after Kanwar Ram's Guru passed on in 1917 AD, young Kanwar moved and stayed in his guru's place.

Bhagat Kanwar Ram recited 'Gurbani' i.e. Shlokas from Guru Granth Sahib (The Sacred book of the Sikhs). He was a humble, generous and compassionate man. He wore a long kurta and a red head gear. He sang and danced at Bhagats. Though he had not trained his voice, it was magical.

Sant Kanwar Ram was renowned for his rendition of the Sur Prabhati (generally sung early in the morning). The record company HMV made 10 records preserving 20 of the saint's musical renditions. These became extremely popular in Sindh.

The money that Bahagat Kanwar Ram would collect would be distributed to the needy.

Let me tell you what a 'Bhagat' is.

Bhagat is what the lead singer is called...and the Bhagat is also what is considered as a very popular art form of 'Sindhi song and dance.

It required at least two performers, as the performance was interactive. Some were good singers, the others peechhads or boliaraas (Back up singers).

The back up singers sometimes dressed up as women.

One of the important miracles connected with Sant Kanwar Ram was that he brought back a dead child to life. While the saint sang and danced, it was his habit to sing a (Lori) lullaby to the children. He used to pray to God to bless the child in his arms.

Mr Chand sent me the following information:

One day, Bhagat Sahib visited a small town for performing a bhagat in the evening. On the same day, the only child of a poor widow had died. She was totally shattered. She knew that the great saint bhagat Kanwaram would be performing in the evening. The Saint used to sing lullabies (loris) to the children. The mother wrapped the child in a cloth and went to the bhagat. She handed over the child into the hands of Bhagat Kanwaram. He blessed the child and started singing loris.

He realized that the child that he had just blessed was dead; The Saint cried out to God.

Bhagat said that people may blame him for the death of the child. He did not care for himself, but he had blessed the child in Gods name to live a hundred years & and his words could not possibly prove wrong (when he had blessed in Gods Name).

If the child did not revive people would lose faith in God's Name!

As tears trickled down the cheeks of Saint Kanwar Ram the child came back to life.

The audience was enthralled!

Once seeing an old woman, carrying her load of firewood on her head, Sant Kanwar Ram escorted her home

At another time, robbers who had come to the village of Jarwar to steal from its inhabitants, left without harming anyone after listening to the melodious, devotional songs of Bhagat Kanwar Ram.

Sant Kanwar Ram's popularity spread.

However as is often the case, the saint's popularity created jealousy amongst some people.

While on his way from Bhagat to Bhagat, a crowd, gathered around him and bowed to him. The saint also bowed to them and offered them 'parsaad'. Sant Kanwar Ram was shot fatally, by these same thugs, at RUK station.

As I mentioned earlier: An estimated 5,000 people gathered in Ruku Railway Station to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the martyrdom of Sant Bhagat...

To add to that report, (according to the email report that I received) it was resolved that a special campaign will be launched, that the name of Ruk Station be changed to 'Bhagat Kanwar Ram Station'

Meera

A beautiful princess lived in India about 500 years ago.

Her name was Meera.

When Meera was a young girl, she saw a marriage procession go by.

Upon seeing the bride and the groom, she asked her mother whom she would marry.

Meera's mother replied that Meera's groom was Lord Krishna.

Meera was overjoyed.

She would spend hours playing with a statue of Lord Krishna, who she came to believe was her husband.

And the statue of Krishna would talk back to Meera and play with her.

Time came for Meera to get married.

Meera refused as she said that she was already married to Krishna.

But her father refused to listen to Meera and insisted that she marry a prince.

She had no choice but to get married to the Prince of Chittor whose name was Bhojraj.

Meera's husband was a good man and allowed her to continue to worship her Krishna.

He also built a private temple for Meera in the palace.

But soon after Meera's husband died.

Meera's brother-in-law (Her husband's brother) was not happy with Meera and her worship of Krishna. He did not like that she spend so much of her time with ordinary people and saints, with who she enjoyed talking about her Krishna.

So he tried to poison her. He sent Meera a bowl of poison and told her that it was parsaad (Blessed food which had been offered to Krishna)

Meera happily started to drink it. But do you think that Meera was harmed? No way! She was saved by Krishna.

Another time Meera's brother-in-law, sent her a snake in a basket.

When Meera opened the basket, the snake turned to flowers.

Meera left the kingdom so she could spend more time with her Krishna without being disturbed.

Soon after there was a terrible drought in Rajasthan where Meera's brother-in-law lived.

People believed that everyone was starving because God had punished them for troubling Meera.

Meera's brother in law asked Meera to forgive him and return home.

But Meera was very happy in Dwarka, where Krishna had lived and ruled, so she forgave her brother-in-law, but did not return to the kingdom.

Instead she went to the Kingdom of Heaven. One day she was singing in her melodious voice and moved towards the statue of Krishna.

And you know what, she melted into Krishna's arms and disappeared from this earth.

Even today, people love to read and sing Meera's poems.

A.P.J ABDUL KALAM

(India's President)

I have been reading: Wings of Fire

It is an Autobiography of, APJ Abdul Kalam, the current President of India.

This book tells us about the Presidents deep involvement with India's first Satellite Launch Vehicle SLV-3.

Since I am impressed at the presidents ideas, I am going to share them with you.

The President believes that one must never feel small or helpless. We are all born with a godly fire in us. Our efforts should be to give wings to this fire and fill the world with the glow of its goodness.

Abdul Kalam was born into a middle class Tamil family. His parents though, did not have, a great formal education were very wise and generous.

The high priest of Rameshwaram Temple Pakshi Lakshmana was a very close friend of Abdul Kalam's father. One of the most vivid memories of Abduls early childhood, is of the two men discussing spiritual matters.

Ahmed Jallaluddin greatly influenced the boyhood of Abdul Kalam.

Jallaluddin would talk of God as if He was his partner.

Jallaludin would present all his doubts to God, as if He were standing nearby to get rid of them.

As young Abdul Kalam would look towards the large group of people round the (Rameshwaram) temple, reciting prayers with a sense of respect towards God, whom they (Muslims) treat as the formless Almighty, Abdul believed without a doubt, that the prayers in the temple reached the same God, as the ones offered in the mosque.

Abdul Kalam went for his interview at the Air Force Selection Board, but the opportunity slipped through his fingers.

A deeply disappointed Abdul trekked down to Rishikesh. He bathed in the Ganga and reveled in the purity of its waters then he walked to the Sivananda Aashram situated a little way up the hill. Abdul Kalam told Swami Sivananda about his unsuccessful attempt to join the Indian Air Force and his along cherished desire to fly.

Swamiji smiled washing away all his (Abduls) pain.

Then Swami Sivananda said in a feeble but very deep voice:

Desire, when it stems from the heart, when it is pure and intense, possesses a lot of energy. That which has been imaged will surely and certainly come to pass.

Abdul Kalam believes that the kingdom of God is within you, to help achieve your goals and realize your dreams

And realize his dreams, Abdul Kalam did!

Abdul prayed to God in Schullers church to help him build a Research Centre at the Imarat Kancha-that would be his Crystal Cathedral.

Abdul writes: You, me, everyone on this planet is sent free by God. We are different in the way we make our choices and make our destiny. I do not wish to set myself as an example to others.

The above is what the President writes, but if you ask me, I think that we should be inspired by the way the President thinks.

Don't you think so?

With Love,

Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

MOTHER TERESA

Dear Children,

Today I am going to tell you how love, faith and service can bring joy to so many human beings. For that I will have to introduce you to Mother Teresa.

Mother Teresa was given the name Agnes Gonxha when she was born on 27th August 1910 in Skopje, Macedonia.

Young Agnes left her parental home at the age of 18 years and became a nun.

She joined the Sisters of Loreto.

She came to Calcutta. When she saw the poverty and suffering outside the convent walls, she devoted herself to work for 'the poorest of the poor'.

She had no money, but she had faith that God would help her and He did!

Soon, voluntary helpers and financial help poured in and she steadily increased her good work. She extended her care for people who had nobody to look after them.

She looked after the homeless, alcoholics, lepers and people with aids and other incurable diseases.

Mother Teresa received many awards.

She received the Peace Prize from Pope John XXIII in 1971 and the Nehru Prize for her promotion of international peace and understanding (1972).

She also received the Balzan Prize (1979) and the Templeton and Magsaysay awards.

Mother Teresa died on September 5, 1997.

Dear Children,

During the month of November, in the year 1981, I had gone to Calcutta and I had a strong desire to meet Mother Teresa. So I set out.

Very strangely people, after having directed me to the right street, could not point out the exact location. So I paced back and forth several times. I finally discovered that the Mother lived on a street behind the one on which I was looking for her. I went inside. Mother was busy with a couple who was looking for a child to adopt. Soon after I was asked to enter. As soon as I saw Mother I fell on my knees and kissed her hand.

I said " I will not take much of your time, I just wanted to have the privilege of being in your presence."

Mother gently told me: "We are all born for a purpose, What I can do, maybe you cannot. But what you are meant to do, I may not be able to".

Listen to your inner voice and follow what it tells you. Everyone in this life is born to accomplish a mission. Hence follow the inner command and you will always be happy"

Mother Teresa knew that everyone cannot lift a leper or a dying child from the street to look after. Everyone cannot do this...

However we all could do our bit, by at least looking after the elderly members of our own family or/and sponsoring some needs of a needy child.

When you grow up, promise yourself that in your hurry-scurry to make fast bucks you do not reject your responsibility towards your old parents or your elderly parents in-law...

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Krishna Is Born

Krishna's mummy and daddy were Devki and Vasudev.

Someone told Devki's brother Kamsa that Devki's 8th son, would kill him.

So Kamsa had Devki and her husband Vaasudev, put in jail.

Vaasudev and Devki remained patient while in jail.

God comes to those who can wait patiently

Kamsa then proceeded to have all his sister's sons killed!

Devki became pregnant with her 8th child.

She prayed to the Lord Narayana that her son who she knew would be God would kill Kamsa.

When the time arrived for the divine child to take birth, the Lord Narayana appeared in His Form with Four Arms! (Chatur-Bhuj-Svaroop)

The Divine Form of God, told Vaasudev and Devki to contemplate and meditate upon this Form for 11 years, as He promised that He would return to them, then.

The Divine 'Chatur-Bhuj-Svaroop' turned to a child form.

Baby Krishna told to Vaasudev to take Him to the house of Nand-Baba where he would be safe for 11 years.

So Vaasudev placed the Divine child in a cane basket, and carried Him on his head.

The Gates of the jail opened miraculously! And the fetters were released!

As Vaasudev crossed the River Yamuna, it rose and rose until it touched the feet of the Divine Child; and then receded!

Vaasudev arrived in Gokul with Krishna.

Krishna grew up as Yashoda's and Nand's child.

So Krishna was very lucky to have two mummies and 2 daddies who loved him very much.

'Yash' means one who gives fame.

Nand means one who gives happiness: 'Anand'.

When the Gopis heard of the 'coming' of Krishna, they ran towards the home of Yashoda-Nand. They were impatient for Krishna-Darshan. (Seeing Krishna).

When Krishna became 11 years old, he returned to Mathura where he killed Kamsa and freed his parents from jail.

The story of God Krishna is a great drama or story.

We must love Krishna who will love us much much more.

Krishna and Yashoda Ma

Krishna was an incarnation of God.

Incarnation means when God takes the form of the body.

Otherwise you can see God everywhere.

When you see the beauty of the mountains and the flowers and the colorful butterflies, one gets a glimpse of God.

What is a glimpse? Well it is a peek into how beautiful, God the Creator is!

Anyway coming back to Krishna, He was a very charming child.

You might ask why I have spelt 'He' with a capital 'H'?

Well because when you refer to God, you refer to Him in capital words.

As I was saying Krishna was a very lovable child. Everyone loved Him.

One day he was playing outside. He put His muddy hands into His mouth His mother Yashoda Maiya, got very upset and she asked little Krishna to open His mouth!

Guess what she saw inside Krishna's mouth? The whole world! Not only did she see the planet, but the whole universe with all the stars and the Sun and the Moon! Yashoda Maiya saw all the continents in the world. All the oceans. All the forests. All the villages. She also saw Vraj, the village in which they lived. She also saw herself looking into Krishna's mouth!

Yashoda Maiya was suddenly afraid that she had mistaken God for Krishna, and she felt very repentant that she had been scolding Krishna. But Krishna did not want His mother to be afraid of Him. He loved His mummy so much!!!

So He started to cry! Yashoda Maiya again saw Krishna in the form of her little child and she lovingly gathered Him in her arms.

Do you love your mummy that much? I am sure that mummy loves you too and she sometimes scolds you because it is for your own good. So that you grow up to be a wonderful grown-up, who the whole world will love and admire!

Kaliya, Cows And Krishna

Did you know that Krishna also went to school? Yes, he was a pupil at the hermitage of Sandipani (The Guru's name). You might wonder why, God Himself should have to study, when He is the Teacher of Teachers! I think that Krishna was instructing the children, that everyone needs to learn! And that no one needs to think that one is so smart, that one need not to go to school!

Krishna was very brave! He plunged into the deep waters of the River Yamuna to retrieve a ball that had fallen into it, while Krishna was playing with His friends!

In the River lived a cobra called Kaliya. The terrible cobra was proud and arrogant and polluted the water of the sacred river.

Krishna and Kaliya engaged in a fierce fight. Of course Krishna emerged victorious. He rose from the river dancing on the fangs of Kaliya!

But Krishna loved animals! He loved the cows! In India we worship the cow as our mother. She provides milk to the babies and grown-ups. She ploughs our fields for cultivating our food. Her urine has medicinal properties and the dung is used as manure and to light village fires. The smoke that emanates from it kills mosquitoes and other disease carrying germs. No wonder Krishna loved the cow and urged us to do the same!

But Krishna was naughty and loved to steal butter from his 'neighborhood aunties' Do you know that butter is soft and nourishing like a loving heart? Yes, I think 'stealing butter' means stealing the hearts. And 'stealing hearts' means loving a lot!

Those who love Krishna believe that He is perfect. Naughty yet loving! A Great friend! Simple yet so smart, that He taught Arjuna, the Great Teachings of the Geeta! It is easy to love Krishna! But first one must get to know Him. And I am introducing Him to you! Will you be His friend?

Krishna and the Children Of Vraj

Lord Brahma is the Creator of the Universe.

Looking at Krishna being such an ordinary boy, Brahma forgot that Krishna was actually God.

So Brahma decided to test Krishna.

He took away the calf that Krishna was looking after.

When Krishna went around looking for the Calf, Brahma played another trick.

He kidnapped all Krishna's friends and cows and calves!

Brahma felt that if Krishna was God, He would be able to re-create His friends and animals!

You know what?

Krishna did exactly that!

All the friends and animals that had been kidnapped by Brahma were recreated exactly by Krishna.

The newly created friends were so like the original ones that for one whole year, even the parents of the children did not find the difference!

Brahma admitted defeat. He repented for having doubted that Krishna was God and returned the children to the beautiful little town called Vraj.

Ranchhod

Krishna is called Ranchhod. Do you know what Ranchhod means? It means one, who abandons the field of battle. Anyone who does the above, is generally called a coward. Do you think that Krishna was a coward?

I do not think so!

Krishna urged His friend Arjuna to fight for what rightfully belonged to him? So then, why did Krishna leave the battlefield? The reason is that a king called Jara Sandh had greatly troubled the inhabitants of Mathura by frequently invading it. However, Jara Sandh would only attack when Krishna was present in Mathura, the reason being that Jara Sandh's enmity was with Krishna. Krishna decided to leave Mathura and the field of battle for the welfare of his people. Krishna concluded that the well-being of the inhabitants of Mathura was more important than His own glory.

So what do we learn from this action of Krishna? I think that what Krishna is trying to tell us, is that there is a time to fight and a time to retreat. A time to fight and a time to forgive and forget. And to forgive and to retreat, can be as glorious as to fight. It all depends upon circumstances.

Do you really understand what I am trying to explain? If you do not, ask mummy or daddy, I am sure that they will be able to explain.

Ah yes! One more thing! I think, that if you are courageous enough to fight, and you decide to forgive, that makes you greater!

Krishna's Flute

Let me tell you a story that I have heard.

There were 2 blocks of wood.

One block became an idol of Krishna and was worshipped by all who loved Him.

The other block of wood, remained a block of wood, and was discarded in a corner.

The discarded block of wood was upset that, it was not getting the wonderful treatment, that the idol was. The idol explained: "I am worshipped today, because I suffered pain while the artist cut me and chiseled me, while you refused to go through the pain and spent your time on things, that you thought would bring you pleasure".

Do you understand what I am trying to tell you?

You have to go through the pain of studies, to reap the fruits of becoming a success later in life! All great learning are the result of hardships.

So it was with the flute that Krishna, so lovingly held close to His lips. The hollow bamboo reed also suffered. It underwent the agony of being pierced. Seven holes were the result. And those holes produced Divine Music when they came in contact with the Divine Breath of the Lord of Lords!

The Flute says: "My stomach is empty. I cannot sing alone. But the cowherds and the cows and the fields sway with pleasure, when my Lord sings through me! And after the Lord plays His tune through me, I again become empty."

Krishna's devotees (Gopis) called the Flute 'Krishna ki Patrani' (Krishna's Queen)

Krishna Steals Hearts

Krishna used to love butter.

He was naughty but all the Gopis in Vraj loved Him.

You want to know who the Gopis are? They were the ‘Aunties’ that lived in Vraj.

They would stock up butter in their homes and wait for Krishna to come and take away the butter, that they had so lovingly prepared for Him.

It is said that Krishna would steal the butter. Why would God want to steal the butter, when all the butter in the world belongs to Him?

I prefer to believe that butter is soft like the heart and so ‘Butter’ means heart, and that is what God does? Steal your heart and all the wrong things that go on in your mind.

Are you able to understand that?

Well anyways, one day Yashoda Ma got very angry with Krishna and ran after Him. But she could not catch Him. You know why? Because while she was running after Krishna , His back was towards her. And the back stands for all the wrong things. So that means that if you are running after the wrong things in life, you will not be able to catch Krishna.

Yashoda Ma was holding a stick in her hand. Can you catch God with a stick in your hand? No, right? So Yashoda Ma was not able to catch Krishna!

When Yashoda Ma got tired of running, and she dropped the stick, Krishna faced her!

Yashoda Ma was no longer holding a stick, and she was no longer looking at Krishna’s back. So she was able to catch Krishna.

Now she decided to tie Krishna. Krishna allowed himself to be tied because He knew that His mother was tying Him with a rope of love!

But Krishna’s mother loved Him too much, so she told Him not to be naughty again, and steal her heart as otherwise she was not able to concentrate on her house work.

Yashoda Ma untied Krishna! Krishna and His mother hugged each other because they loved each other so very much!

Love for Krishna

You know that God is present everywhere. He is more powerful than the most powerful person on earth. Yet God comes under the control, of those who love Him very much.

Let me tell you about Krishna.

Even though Krishna is God, He was very mischievous and lovable. The Gopis (the ladies of Vrindavan) loved Him a lot. Krishna was very fond of eating butter. The Gopis told Krishna, that they would give Him butter, if He agreed to dance for them. And you know what? Krishna did!

The above proves that if you truly love God, He is going to do anything for you. But for that, you have to give him butter. And you know what butter means in this case? Your mind and your heart!

As I told you, Krishna was a very mischievous child.

Once, His mother Yashoda tried to tie Him up. But she was not able to succeed, as every time that she tried, the string became small. After a long struggle, Krishna made the string of the right size, and allowed Himself to be tied!

You know what that means? It means that one who really loves God is able to bind Him.

Krishna is always close to those who love Him. Speak to Him! He will hear you and answer all your prayers.

Yes, He will answer!

Sometimes His answer will be 'Yes'!

Sometimes it will be 'No'!

And sometimes it will be 'Wait'!

Special Love

Once Satyabhaama, one of Krishna's wives felt that she was loved the most, by Krishna.

Satyabhaama enquired of Naaradji, a sage, how she could ensure, that she attain Krishna as her husband, in her next life also. Naaradji said that you achieve that, in the next life, which you give away, in this life in charity (Daan).

So Satyabhaama gave Krishna away to Naarad.

Naaradji decided to take Krishna away with him.

All the queens panicked as they saw Krishna being led by Naarad.

Naaradji promised to release Krishna if any of the wives, could give Naaradji, something equivalent to Krishna's weight!

All the wives brought out their prized possessions, and placed them on the scale; but Krishna turned out to be heavier!

Then Rukmani plucked a basil (Tulsi) leaf and placed it on the scale '**with all her love**'. And Lo and Behold! Krishna was out-weighed!

At this point let me quote from the Geeta where Krishna says in the 25th verse of the 9th Chapter:

I accept (that offering happily) of a leaf, a flower, a fruit, a little water, (which is given to me) with devotion and a pure mind! (heart)

The Peacock Feather

If you have ever seen the picture of Lord Krishna, you would have noticed that His crown is adorned with a peacock feather.

I have heard, that in old times, the peacock feather was considered inauspicious. (Do you know what 'inauspicious' means? It means 'something that is not very lucky')

When Krishna heard that, He just picked up the peacock feather and placed it on His crown.

Can you imagine, how important and special the peacock feather must have felt, to know that the Almighty Lord chose it, to become a part of His crown?

So now when the feather falls from the peacock, it is happy, as it knows that Krishna will give it, the respect and love that it deserves.

The above story teaches us a lesson. It tells us that no one, and nothing is unlucky. It also teaches us that God loves everybody. He also, loves them, who are not loved and respected by others.

So next time, you consider someone 'not good enough' in studies, sports etc. Remember that God has a special place for them. If you love and respect them, God will also make a special place for you, in His heart.

Radha

Dear Children,

Whenever you hear about Krishna, you hear a name connected with Him.

That of Radha.

Radha was Krishna's childhood friend. She played with Krishna and loved Him immensely.

For Radha, Krishna was her friend, her playmate, her God.

Try saying Radha a few times continuously. You will notice that you are saying 'Dhaara'

Dhaara means spring . Radha is the spring of Love that continuously comes out from Krishna and returns to Him.

In other words Radha stands for Krishna's love.

Radha was born in Barsana, a place very close to Vrindaavan. 30 Km from Mathura.

Radha was the daughter of King Brishabano and Mata Kirati. Even today, the people of Barsana wish each other with the words "Raadhe Raadhe" on their lips.

Radhaji was older to Sri Krishna and it is believed that the Divine girl did not open her eyes until Krishna was born.

Krishna loved Radha very much.

Once Krishna was dancing with the Gopis (cowherds) of Vrindaavan.

Each Gopi believed that Krishna was dancing with her, and only for her.

So they felt very proud of the fact.

You know what Krishna did?

He just disappeared.

This is what God does when we feel very proud of the fact that only we are the best.

We have to learn that God loves all equally, whether one is black or white or belongs to one religion or another.

Anyway, to continue with the story the only person who did not feel proud was Radha.

Krishna and Radha ran into the woods. Radha saw a beautiful flower on the branch of a tree. Radha wanted the flower but she could not reach it.

Krishna told Radha to stand on His shoulder to get the flower.

At that moment Radha felt very proud of her position and felt that she was better than everyone.

Guess what happened?

Krishna disappeared!

And Radha was left hanging on the branch!

When Radha cried because she missed Krishna so much, He came back.

Radha understood that Krishna is happy when she believes that everyone is the same in the eyes of God.

Dear Children, do you understand what I am trying to say.

I am saying that God is very unhappy when we believe that we are the greatest if we are Hindus, Muslim, Christian, White, black, Americans, Indians, etc.

The fact is that God loves us all the same and He disappears from our life if we become proud.

God cannot really disappear because He is everywhere, but the fact is we will not be able to see Him.

So if you want to feel God in your life, what do you need to do?

Yes, you have guessed right, love everyone, rich or poor, Hindu or Muslim, black or white.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Raksha Bandhan

Dear Children,

'Raksha' means 'protection'. It is a beautiful festival that celebrates the bond that a brother and sister enjoy. The sister ties a colorful string (raakhi) on her brother's wrist to remind him that he must protect her during difficult times. It is believed that the sister protects her brother by virtue of the fact that she prays that her brother is always saved from harm's way always, and in every way.

The brother gives the sister a gift in cash or kind.

Indrani tied it on Lord Indra's (King of Heaven) wrist to protect him while He warred with the Demons.

You should tie it on your Loved Deity's or/and Guru's wrist to seek protection.

Krishna may not only be considered a 'brother' but you may have various types of relationships with Him. He can be your 'Guru' your 'friend', your child, even your Husband.

Meera sang:

*'Mere to Giridhar Gopal, doosro na koyee'
Jaakey sar Mor-Mukut mero pati soyee'*

Which means that I only recognize 'My Krishna,(He who adorns Himself with a peacock-feather) on His crown, as my husband'

With love,

Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

Your Best Friend - Ganesha

Dear Children,

Do you know Lord Ganesha?

Ganesha has very big ears, which denotes that He is able to hear everything.

Ganesha has a big trunk.

Did you know that a big trunk has the quality of being able to uproot a tree?

It also can pick up a tiny needle from a haystack?

So the big trunk of Lord Ganesha represents that the tiniest creature does not pass unnoticed by Him.

Lord Ganesha's large belly denotes prosperity.

His wide forehead denotes great wisdom.

His carriage is a rat! The rat represents the earth.

How can an elephant God sit on a rat?

Seems absurd! But it is not so!

God, despite being the Lord of Creation, attends to our earth, which is like a speck of dust in the Universe.

At this time of the year many people bring a Ganesha idol home, to be worshipped.

If you want to bring a small idol in your home and worship Him like millions do in India, it is fine.

You can, however worship Him in your heart, any time.

You could also keep a small Ganesha idol, that you own, and place it in a prominent place in your house, during the Ganpati, 11 days of worship.

Offer Him flowers, light some incense.

You do not need difficult prayers to please Him and listen to your prayers.

Just chant: 'Om Ganeshaaya Namah' with faith.

Offer Him sweets.

You do not need to immerse that Ganesha in the water.

Just lovingly keep Him back in His original place, in your home.

You could do this any time of the year that you feel like.

Ganesha is endearing.

It is very easy to love Him.

Cuddle Him and keep Him close to your heart, always.

He could become your best friend.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Mother Goddess

Navratras (not in hindi book there is another one)

Dear Children,

Let me tell you more about Mother Goddess and her different names. She is worshipped, the year round, but specially during Navratras.

One of Mother's names is Durga. Durga means a fort. A fort is a place where the old kings used to live. It was very well protected. Similarly, if one worships Ma Durga, it will be like living in a very well protected place, where no enemy can attack! Mother holds weapons and emblems in Her 10 hands. She has a benign face, a smile and a golden yellow hue. She rides a lion and drives a spear into the chest of a Demon. That Demon's name is Mahishaasur. Mahishaasur changed his form many a time, but Mother ultimately trapped him under Her foot. The demon and his various forms represents evil and its various disguises. Also the bad habits that we have. It is believed that Sri Ram prayed to the Mother before embarking for Lanka to fight the demon Raavana.

The Mother is known as 'Shakti' or the Divine Female Energy. Mother carries a conch in one of Her hands. The conch gives out the sound of OM. The sound OM is considered a sacred syllable by the Hindus. The word OM is easy to remember. Will you remember to say it when you are in distress?

Most of our Mantras (Prayers) start with the word "OM" The word "I AM" is also very powerful. Never say anything negative after the words 'I AM' Say after me:

I AM Lovable
I AM Healthy
I AM Capable etc

And watch yourself turning into a super human being! But worship Mother first. Ask her for help, protection and guidance! And she will be there for you. Aren't all mothers? Then how can the Divine Mother fail us? She only tests us and punishes us when we are naughty, for our own good!

Got it?

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Dussehra

Dear Children,

On Dussehra day Sri Ram killed the great demon Ravana, who had abducted Sri Ram's wife Sita to his kingdom of Lanka. Sri Ram was a great believer in the powers of Goddess Durga, and He prayed to Her for nine days before He Himself entered the battlefield on the 10th day. Dussehra is also called Vijayadashmi or the 'victorious tenth day'.

It is believed that Ravan had 10 faces. They are probably symbolic of the 10 evil facets of his character.

The word Dussehra comes from the word 'Dus' meaning 'Ten' and 'Hara', meaning 'annihilated'. So Dussehra is the day in which the 10 facets of Evil were destroyed.

One must not forget that Ravana was a great scholar and a tremendous worshipper of Lord Shiva. His weakness, 'that of wanting to possess Sita' destroyed him. But you will be surprised to learn that Ravana's enmity and therefore obsession with Sri Ram fetched him Liberation.

Do you know what 'Liberation' means? Hindus believe that we take birth into the world many times, in order to learn our lessons. It is like, if one fails an examination, one continues to appear for the examination until one succeeds. Liberation 'happens' when you do not need to take birth, any more, but enjoy the joys of heaven forever.

Hindu Scriptures claim that you may think of the Lord in whichever way you please, you may pray to Him, complain to Him, talk to Him, fight with Him...Your obsession with Him will make you a candidate for a Release from the Wheel of Life and Death. It is clearly mentioned in the Scriptures that Sri Ram Himself could not wound Ravana while the latter had his mind fixed on Sri Ram.

Ravana's destruction came in, the moment that his concentration was distracted.

On Dussehra day, people worship weapons. I believe, that maybe one worships weapons, to remember to use them in a wise manner.

On Dussehra day, it is customary to exchange leaves of the Apta tree. There is a story connected with the above custom.

Sri Ram's ancestor relative's name was king Raghu. He was very generous. After a great 'Yagna' (Prayer) the king had distributed all his wealth among the poor.

Raghu had nothing left to give a poor boy, who came to his door step asking for alms. Raghu attacked Kuber, the God of Wealth. As gold rained on earth, some of it fell on the Apta tree. Therefore, since then people exchange leaves of the Apta tree on Dussehra day.

In Bengal the occasion is celebrated as the day on which Durga Ma killed the terrible demon Mahishasur.

The most important point to remember is that, Dussehra is celebrated all over India as a symbol of victory over evil.

Shall we also destroy our 10 faces of Hypocrisy and deceit, triumph over our negative tendencies and march forward in our flower bedecked cars towards Eternal Victory?

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Happy Diwali

Dear children,

On Diwali, we celebrate the coming home of Sri Ram from his 14 year stay in the forest. He returned victorious after he had slain the demon king Raavana.

I have already told you the story of Ram and Seeta.

On Diwali we also celebrate the fact that Krishna killed Narakasura, another demon king.

The fireworks denote the fiery weapons that Krishna used.

The above 2 stories and their connection with Diwali tell us that Goodness and Truth always wins. It takes time and trouble, but it always pays, to be good and truthful.

We also believe that the Goddess Laxmi, (Goddess of Wealth) comes to our home during Diwali. To welcome Her, we clean our homes and decorate them with Rangoli.

Do you know what Rangoli is?

It is pictures of beautiful colors, with which we decorate the entrance of the house.

It looks like a beautiful carpet, for Goddess Laxmi to walk on.

Did you know, that the long way of saying Diwali, is Deepavali?

Deepavali means a row of lights.

One also lights small lamps which are called deeyas.

Do you know why, in most religions, fire is worshipped?

Let me tell you.

The flame always rises upwards.

We should also always strive to move higher in life.

The light of the flame removes darkness.

Darkness could stand for ignorance.

And fire destroys impurities. Gold shines brighter when it goes through fire.

So light Deeyas, Spread love amongst family and friends, enjoy your sweets and bring cheer to all.

Have a wonderful Diwali,

With love,

Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

RAMA'S CORONATION

After Rama completed his education, the time came that he should be crowned king.

Everyone in the kingdom was very happy as Rama was very capable.

However, at that time Kaikayee decided to ask Dasharatha that her wishes be granted.

She asked king Dasharatha that her son Bharat should be crowned king instead of Rama.

She also asked that Rama should be banished to the forest for 14 years.

King Dasharatha was very unhappy, but Rama told his father that he must keep his promise. So Rama, along with his wife Seeta and brother Laxman left for the forest.

In the forest Seeta was kidnapped by a demon king called Ravana.

Rama urged Raavana to return Seeta unharmed.

But Raavana refused.

Rama with the help of Hanuman, the monkey God and his army, marched against Raavana, who lived in the golden city of Lanka.

After a very fierce battle, Raavana was defeated.

The defeat of Raavana is celebrated in India as Dassera.

Seeta was safe with Rama.

They both returned to their kingdom after 14 years and reigned for a very very long time.

Rama and Seeta's triumphant homecoming is celebrated as Diwali.

JUDAISM-Rosh Hashanah, Jewish New Year

Jews usher in a New Year in the month of Tishri

They pray and wish each other saying: "May you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a happy new year"

Jesus was a Jew and what he stated, was very close to what the Jewish Scriptures taught.

The Jewish scriptures describe how God created the world.

The Jews believe that God created the world in 6 days, and rested on the 7th day.

Rosh Hashanah, also called *Yom Ha Din*, (Jewish New Year) falls in September and is regarded as the anniversary of the day that God created the world. *Yom Kippur*, eight days after the New Year is considered to be the Day of Judgment.

The Celebration begins with a blast of the *shofar* (ram's horn) to announce that the God who created the world is still the one ruling it. Also it is believed that the blast of the horn will drive away evil spirits. The sound of the *Shofar* touches the core of ones heart, and it could be a considered a 'call' to repent for past misdeeds.

The Jew's prayer of forgiveness is called *Tashlich* which means 'casting off'. The Jews throw bread crumbs into the water. They pray that their sins are 'swallowed up' like the bread crumbs will.

The custom of tearing clothes was a sign of sorrow for having sinned. However God is more concerned with a change of heart, which means, to stop sinning and to obey the laws of the Lord.

The first prayer that a Jew learns as a child is:

“Shema Yisroel Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echod”

Which means: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One”

This prayer, a devout Jew also says, before he dies!

The New Year Greeting is ‘*Leshanah Tovah Tikatavu*’

Which means: “May you be inscribed for a good New Year”

It is customary to eat bread (the loaves are dipped in honey) on Jewish New Year. It could be a wish that the coming year brings ‘sweet, smooth plenty’

The early Jews were slaves, and were unhappy with their condition.

Moses led the Jews out of Egypt and captivity.

Moses was given the 10 commandments by God.

Some of these commandments of God, urge Jews to honor their parents, not to murder, to remain faithful, speak the truth, not to steal what does not belong to them, and to lead a good life, and perform good deeds (*mitzvah*) ie, visit the sick, not hurt people’s feelings, the study of the scriptures...

Please note that what God taught the Jews is not different from what the other religions teach.

Devotion and *Amidah* (silent prayer) is the essence in Judaism.

Those who devote their life to good deeds, prayer and love for all, are the *Hasidim* or the Pious Ones.

Today, not only the Jews, but all of us have to remember what God commanded.

And I am trying in a very small way to share with you, what I have learned and feel to be true.

RAMZAN and BAKRI ID

Dear children,

Ramzan is the only month in the Muslim calendar which is specially mentioned in the Holy Koran. It is during this month that devout Muslims fast and pray, for a month. They do not eat or drink anything between sunrise and sunset, dawn and dusk. This is known as the Roza.

Not only do devout Muslims fast and pray five times during the day, but they donate 25% of their income (zakat) to the poor. Prayer deepens their love for God.

Everyday the roza is broken by eating dates or tasting salt. Muslims, then get together and share 'iftaari' (a snack or a small meal)

I have read that people who pray together, stay together. Sharing a meal creates a bond. So I believe that the month of roza, generates a feeling of brotherhood.

Ramzan Id, also called Id-ul-Fitr comes at the end of the month of fast. It is a thanksgiving celebration after a month of abstinence. The special prayers or namaaz offered on that day is called the kutba

On Id people dress up in new clothes, hug one another, exchange good wishes and enjoy bowls and bowls of Sheerkurma (sweetened milk and vermicelli garnished with nuts).

Bakri Id is a Muslim festival that celebrates the trust of Man in God and an important happening in Islam.

Dear Children, did you know that the great great grandfather of Jesus was Ibrahim?

Ibrahim is known as Khalilullah, which means, a friend of God.

It is believed that Ibrahim had a son very late in life, and Ibrahim loved him dearly.

God wanting to test the faith of Ibrahim, and asked the latter to offer his son Ismail as a sacrifice to him. I am told by an Islamic Scholar, that God did not ask for Ibrahim's son, but for who Ibrahim loved most. Since Ibrahim loved Ismail the most, he decided to offer him as a sacrifice to God.

Ibrahim took his son Ismail to a mountain. Ismail knew what his father was about to do, so Ibrahim blindfolded his father (son), so that the latter would not suffer at the sight of what he was about to do.

After Ibrahim plunged his knife, he removed the piece of cloth around his eyes, and lo and behold, a goat had been sacrificed and his son Ismail stood unharmed!

To remember this occasion, Muslims around the world sacrifice an animal. The animal popularly used is a goat.

The Islamic Scholar explained to me that Islam's message is to feed the poor, not to kill humans and/or animals. Another friend explained to me that the name of Allah is mentioned whenever an animal is killed for food. She wrote: **WITHOUT UTTERING THE NAME OF ALLAH WHILE AN ANIMAL IS BEING SLAUGHTERED, MUSLIMS MAY NOT EAT ITS FLESH, THUS MAKING IT A SACRED RITUAL, A SORT OF THANKSGIVING FOR BEING PROVIDED WITH SUSTENANCE.**

One must remember that Islam was born in a desert land where vegetables were scarce. My friend also enlightened me on the fact that the Prophet Mohammed's diet consisted mostly of khajur (dates) and jau ki roti.

Id Mubaarak!

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Prophet Mohammed

Dear Children,

When Prophet Mohammed was in his youth he used to regularly visit a cave near Mount Hira.

When He was older, he was visited by angel Gabriel who urged the prophet to 'Read'! Prophet Mohammed was initially reluctant because he did not know how to read. The Angel insisted and commanded the Prophet by telling him to proclaim!

"Proclaim in the name of your Lord who created..."

Dear Children, In simple words, what the Angel was saying was, that the Prophet should state publicly what God wants to tell the world (that they do not know) through him (prophet Mohammed).

Prophet Mohammed's basic message was to have faith in One True God who he called Allah and in righteous action.

Prophet Mohammed always clarified that he was only a prophet. He simply preached what he received.

And receive, he did.

The Quran was the outcome!

Quran is considered the spoken Word of God.

Prophet Mohammed was so peace loving that he signed a peace treaty when many of his followers were ready to fight till death.

He could go without a meal for days on end.

One of the moral virtues of the Prophet is 'kindliness to unbelievers'

And as I have said earlier all prophets, saints and Incarnations should be respected.

Why? Because they are lamps that light the way of those who are good and have moved away from the evil path.

Would you not rather be in a bright place rather than a dark one?

I know I would!

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Hijira and Kaaba

Dear Children,

During the first three years, Prophet Mohammed had only 40 followers.

Since what the Prophet taught was not in keeping with the Meccan way of life,
The prophet and his followers were ill-treated.
The latter were made fun of, stoned, beaten and thrown into prison.
Dear children, sometimes you have to go through a difficult time, before your hard work
bears fruit.
Maybe at that time, God is trying to test how strong your faith is!
Then one day Prophet Mohammed and his followers received good news!
Yathrib, a city 280 miles North of Mecca needed a strong ruler.
A delegation from Yathrib was ready to worship Allah only, and defend defend Prophet
Mohammed and his followers if the latter took the job of becoming their leader.
The Prophet prayed. When he received approval from Allah, he decided to escape to
Yathrib along with his followers.
The leaders in Mecca tried to prevent the escape but Prophet Mohammed along with his
close friend Abu Bakr managed to arrive Yathrib safely.
The Muslims celebrate this happening as the Hijira. This event occurred in the year 622.
Yathrib was renamed as Medinat al-Nabi, "the City of the Prophet," and is now known
simply as Medina, "the City."
In Medina, Prophet Mohammed proved to be a talented politician.
In 630, Prophet Mohammad defeated Mecca.
The Prophet rededicated the Ka'ba temple to Allah.
Prophet Mohammed died in 632, having conquered nearly all of Arabia for Islam.
With love,
Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Dear Children,
The Quran states:
“For every folk a guide”

God is so kind that He sent a gifted teacher or prophet for every religion.

Islamic tradition states that one hundred and twenty four thousand such wonderful Beings were sent to this world!

All Saints and prophets, sent by God teach and speak of conflict between good and evil and request humanity to give up the wicked path and take to that of virtue.

Tagore says:
“Truly no religion can succeed without the shining example of a gifted teacher.”

All prophets should be respected as all were sent as a messenger of divine guidance.

Let me tell you the words of a song that I enjoy singing.
I am not sure as to who has written the words.

Ishwar Allah Wahguru
Chaahey kaho Sri Ram
Maalik sabka ek hai
Alag alag hain naam

Geeta Bible ya ho Quraan
Maalik ka sabmein hai gyaan
Sabka pyaara sadaa banaata
Sabkey bigdey kaam

Maalik sabka ek hai
Alag alag hain naam

Which means:
You may call God by the name of
Ishwar Allah or Wahguru or Sri Ram
He is the Lord of all
Even though His name may be different

The Lords teachings appear in the Geeta, Bible or Quraan
Everyone’s Loved one (God) always
Clears ones (path of) difficulties...
He is the Lord of all
Even though His name may be different...

With love,
Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Dear Shakun

I made some correction in Quran;’s translation or from Islamic point of view. The words I replaced are still there which are striked through in red.

At some places where it is purely your views, I have just some suggestions which I made after striking through your word in Green color. Such Green color writings are just my suggestions only.

Uzma

Divine Revelation

Dear Children,

When Prophet Mohammed was in his late thirties he used to regularly visit a cave near Mount Hira.

When He was 40 years of age he was visited by angel Gabriel who urged the prophet to **proclaim!** Read...!

Prophet Mohammed was unlettered (he could not read or write) **initially reluctant and** He said: "I **am not a proclaimer.**"" I cannot read."

The Angel insisted and commanded the Prophet by saying:

Proclaim Read in the name of your Lord who created!

Created man from a clot of blood.

Proclaim: Read: Your Lord is the Most Generous,
Who teaches by the pen;

Teaches man what he knew not. (Qur'an 96:1-3)

Dear Children, In simple words, what the Angel was saying was, that the Prophet should state publicly what God wants to tell the world (that they do not know) through him (prophet Mohammed).

Prophet Mohammed's basic message was to have faith in One True God who he called Allah and in righteous action.

Prophet Mohammed always clarified that he was only a prophet. He was not an angel, he did not know the mind of God and he did not perform miracles. He simply preached what he received.

And receive, he did.

The Quran was the outcome!

Quran is considered the spoken Word of God.

Prophet Mohammed was so peace loving that he signed a peace treaty when many of his **followers** enemies were ready to fight till death.

He could go without a meal for days on end.

One of the moral virtues of the Prophet is 'kindliness to unbelievers'

As long as you believe in one God you cannot be considered an unbeliever.

And as I have said earlier all prophets, saints and Incarnations should be respected.

Why? Because they are lamps that light the way of those who are good and have moved away from the evil path.

Would you not rather be in a bright place rather than a dark one?

I know I would!

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Dear Children,

The Quran states:

“For every folk a guide”

God is so kind that He sent a gifted teacher or prophet for every **religion** people

Islamic tradition states that one hundred and twenty four thousand such wonderful Beings were sent to this world!

All saints and prophets, sent by God teach and speak of conflict between good and evil and request humanity to give up the wicked path and take to that of virtue.

Tagore says:

“Truly no religion can succeed without the shining example of a gifted teacher.”

All prophets should be respected as all were sent as a messenger of divine guidance.

Let me tell you the words of a song that I enjoy singing.

I am not sure as to who has written the words.

Ishwar Allah Wahguru

(What Allah is to Muslims, Ishwar is to Hindus and Waheguru to Sikh. As per these three people He is God Almighty who is nirakaar (has no shape and cannot be seen) all powerfull and creator). Shri Ramchanderji as per Hindu scriptures was a king, a human being who married, had children. His name could be more appropriately put with prophets of God Almighty.)

Chaahey kaho Sri Ram

Maalik sabka ek hai

Alag alag hain naam

Geeta Vedas, Bible ya ho Quraan

Maalik ka sabmein hai gyaan

Sabka pyaara sadaa banaata

Sabkey bigdey kaam

Note:

Geeta Bible ya ho Quraan

As per Christianity and Islam: Bible and Qran resp. are their religious books which are the words of God Almighty reveled to their prophets Jesus (PBUH) and Muhammed (P.B.U.H).

In case of Hinduism their equivalent is/are Vedas, which are also known as Iswar bani (Words of God) whereas as per the belief of Hindus Geeta and Mahabhatta are human creations or books written by human saints.

I therefore suggest to make it Vedas, Bible ya ho Quran

Maalik sabka ek hai

Alag alag hain naam

Which means:

You may call God by the name of

Ishwar Allah or Wahguru or **Sri Ram**

He is the Lord of all

Even though His name may be different

The Lords teachings appear in the Geeta, Bible or Quraan

Everyone's Loved one (God) always

Clears ones (path of) difficulties...

He is the Lord of all

Even though His name may be different...

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

From: Shakun Narain <shakun@dalsabzi.com>

Vithoba (Pandharpur Festival)

Dear Children,

Our holy books say that there can be four types of children.

1. The ‘not so good’ kind who trouble their parents: Shatruputra.
2. The ok ones who neither trouble, nor are very good to their parents: Rinubandhi.
3. Those who leave home early in life, to study, may not get married. These do not have much contact with their parents: Udaaseen.
4. The children who really look after their aged parents selflessly and tirelessly: Sevakputra

I have already told you the story of Shravan Kumar.

(You may read about how Shravan Kumar looked after his blind parents, as a dutiful son, on my web-site)

An example for the ‘not so good’ kind of son: (Shatru-putra) is Dhundhukaari, in the story of ‘Aatmadev’. (Also on my web-site)

Let me tell you a story about a good kind of son: ‘Sevak-putra’

His name was Pundaalik.

Pundaalik used to serve his parents with supreme devotion.

God appeared to Pundaalik while the latter was occupied in doing something that his parents had asked him to do.

Pundaalik refused to leave his job half done, to attend to the Lord!

So Pundaalik handed out a brick to the Lord, to rest on, while he completed his duties!

But do you think that God was upset that He was being made to wait while Pundaalik completed his chores.

No way!

The Lord was amused and He put his hands on his waist and waited patiently for Pundaalik to complete the ‘seva’ (service).

Eent means brick. Remember that Pundaalik asked the Lord to rest on a brick?

‘Eent’ became ‘Veet’ through the passage of time.

This form of the Lord is called 'Veethoba' and the place where the Lord appeared to Pundaalik is called 'Pandharpur'.

Many people flock to Pandharpur , to remember and honor the dutiful child.

Which kind of child are you?

Would you like to be remembered as a good child, or bad, when you grow up?

Remember, being good, does not mean being boring.

It just means that you do what is required of you at the appropriate time.

It is simpler to finish your homework and house work, without spending too much time arguing. You will then have a much longer time to play and do what you really enjoy doing?

Am I right?

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Guru Nanak

(1469-1539)

Guru Nanak was not born in a very rich family.

Guru Nanak Sahib's birthday falls on the 30th of November.

Guru Nanak's father's name was Mehta Kalian Das.

At the age of 6, young Nanak was sent to school. Guru Nanak was clever in Hindi, Mathematics, Muslim Literature, Persian and Arabic. Young Nanak learned quickly.

One day Guru Nanak wrote a hymn for the Village school teacher which scolded man for having forgotten God who was the true Giver and the One who had created the world. Guru Nanak told his Muslim teacher to be good, honest and truthful

At the age of 16 young Nanak was married to Sulakhani and was happy. He loved his wife and eventually had two sons Sri Chand in 1494 and Lakshmi Chand three years later.

Guru Nanak, loved to meditate. Once a cobra shielded him from the scorching heat as he was absorbed in the name of the Lord.

Another time, the cattle that he was tending crossed over and destroyed a farmer's field. The farmer complained to young Nanak's father but when they went to inspect the field, they were astonished to note that the crops were intact. The farmer insisted that it was a miracle.

Young Nanak's father wanted him to lead a normal life and to earn a decent living. So he gave him some money to make a profit. Guru Nanak spent that money feeding sages and mendicants. He claimed that that was a good bargain.

At Sultanpur where Guru Nanak worked as a shop-keeper, he met Mardana, who was to become his constant companion. Mardana was a musician. Guru Nanak started to sing hymns accompanied by Mardana on the rabab (a string instrument). These sessions attracted a lot of people.

Guru Nanak proclaimed that there was no Hindu and no Mussalmaan. He explained that since both were the children of God, they were brothers and sisters.

At the age of 30, Guru Nanak, started his extensive travels to spread the word of God. He conveyed his message in the form of musical hymns.

Children, do you know what is a cannibal?

A cannibal is a man who eats people for a meal.

Guru Nanak once went up boldly and unafraid in front of a dreaded cannibal chief named Kauda. Kauda was thrilled as he saw his 'meal' coming to him. He started to heat the oil in anticipation. When Guru Nanak came close to him, Kauda tested the oil. He found it cold! Not to give up so easily, Kauda caught Guru Nanak in his muscular arms and flung him into the fire! As Kauda watched Guru Nanak step out of the fire unharmed, Kauda trembled, repented and stood reverently with folded hands. Kauda took a vow not to harm anyone. Thus from a killer Kauda was transformed into a servant and teacher of men.

The last part of his worldly life, Guru Nanak spent in Kartarpur. The Great Guru would wake at dawn and recite his daily prayers. At daybreak, he would address his followers. He worked in his free kitchen, which even today is popularly known as 'Langar'.

Have you seen a picture of Guru Nanak? Ask mummy to show you and to take you to a Gurdwara. And then write to me and tell me about it.

Karwa Chauth

I personally like what the ‘Greeting Cards’ people in India are calling ‘Karva Chauth Day’. They are calling it the ‘Husband’s Day’

What about the wife’s day, you might ask?

It is heartening to know that Hindus have always believed in worshipping the Male and Female aspect of God together. And that Sri Ram was a staunch Pati-Vrat (devoted) husband.

Not only that, one says Seeta Ram and Radha Krishna.

As you can see the female name gets precedence.

Karwa Chauth Day falls on the dark (Krishna) Chaturthi of the month of Ashwin after Sharad Purnima. I also read somewhere that it falls on the 4th day of the new moon after Dussehra.

On this day it is customary for the wife to fast the whole day. She does not drink water either. She paints her hands and feet with henna, dresses generally in red apparel and on her hair parting she smears vermillion powder. All the above is the ‘Shringar’ of a bride. A lady called Veeravati broke her fast and her husband died. She preserved the body of her husband and he came back to life the next Karva Chauth.

It is believed that a Pati-Vrat woman has the power to confront the God of Death, Yama. This Karva Chauth fast is undertaken by the wife, so that the husband enjoys a long and prosperous life.

The story of Karva is well known. Her husband was caught by a crocodile. Karva bound the crocodile with a cotton yarn. She then asked Yama to send the crocodile to hell.

Yama refused. Karva threatened to curse Yama. Yama, afraid of being cursed by Pati-vrat (devoted) wife, sent the crocodile to hell. Karva and her husband enjoyed many years of wedded bliss.

The fact that Yama was afraid of being cursed by a devoted wife showed the power a good faithful woman!

Maybe you have heard the story of Savitri. The latter followed Yama, who carried away her dead husband. Yama said that she could ask for any other boon except for the life of her husband. Savitri asked that she be blessed with children. Yama agreed. Being a Pati-Vrat wife, Savitri would never any other man, be the father of her children. Yama was left with no other choice but to restore Savitri’s husband to life.

In the olden days, a woman was dependant on a man. Whether he was her father, brother, husband or Guru. Without a man she was considered incomplete. Today that may not be the case. But it is still refreshing to see a loving wife...or a loving husband for that matter...so personally I do not have a problem observing ‘husband’s day’ as long as a woman is also worshipped on other days...and I must admit that the Hindu calendar is full of them.

JEWISH FESTIVALS: CHANUKAH

Chanukah is a festival of Lights (December)

It is celebrated in Jewish homes and synagogues during the month of December for eight days.

It commemorates the victory of the Jews over the Greek rulers.

This Festival revolves around the family. It was because of the courage of five brothers, who fought bravely and died a violent death that the Jews were saved from annihilation.

The Jews recognize the strength of a united family. Jews also urge their fellow men to appreciate the 'unseen things' that bring happiness in life.

The miracle that Chanukah celebrates came about thus: The oil, which could have kept the candelabrum alight for 1 day, lasted for 8 days.

During Chanukah one candle is lit on the first night, two on the second and so on, until on the eighth day, 8 candles are lit. In India, Jews light oil lamps. Gifts are exchanged and Jews eat potato pancakes and doughnuts made with oil. Food and clothing is distributed in charity or tzedakah to the needy.

In short, Chanukah reminds us about the strength of a family, the miracles of faith and the the Lights that lead us to recognize subtle truths and eternal wisdom.

A reader once asked me:

Hi Shakun,

I loved the story of Chanukah. Can you share with me what exactly the five brothers did that helped the preservation of Jews?

Thanks

I replied:

This Festival revolves around the family. It was because of the courage of five brothers, who fought bravely and died a brutal death that the Jews were saved from annihilation.

The Jews recognize the strength of a united family. Jews also urge their fellow men to appreciate the 'unseen things' that bring happiness in life.

The family teaches one about love, sharing, caring, values and sacrifice. It is the strong family that teaches us strength. These values have contributed to the survival of the Jews despite odds. Maybe the death of the five brothers inspired the Jews through the ages...

CHRISTMAS

Dear Children,

The festival of Christmas falls on the 25th of December and celebrates the birth of Jesus. According to the Gospel of St Luke, an angel appeared to Mary and told her that she was to have a child.

A little later Mary and her husband Joseph left their home in Nazareth to travel to Bethlehem. Since there were no room at the inns, they lodged in a stable.

There, Mary gave birth to Jesus.

An angel went to the fields and told the shepherds the "tidings of joy." (The birth of Jesus)

A heavenly host proclaimed,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."

The shepherds then came to the manger to adore the infant Jesus

Dear Children,

Do you know that Christmas comes from the word: Christ Mass.

Sometimes Christmas is abbreviated as Xmas.

The Roman letter "X" resembles the Greek letter X (chi), which is an abbreviation for Christ.

Whenever one thinks of Christmas one thinks of the exchange of gifts.

The gifts are attributed to Santa Claus, who is also known as Father Christmas and Saint Nicholas.

Do you know who Saint Nicholas was?

Saint Nicholas lived in the 4th Century and loved to gift secretly.

The name Santa Claus could have come from the word Sinterklaas (Netherlands), which probably is a contracted form of Sint Nicolaas (Saint Nicholas)

Whoever it may be who comes laden with gifts during Christmas, we love them dearly and we like to deserve those beautiful gifts...how?

By being good and listening to our parents who wish the world for us!

Am I right?

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

Jesus' Teachings

Dear Children,

Jesus was born a Jew.

For the first years of his life, Jesus lived a typical Jewish life.

When he was 12 years old, he went to the synagogue and surprised everyone with his wisdom about Mosaic Law with priests and rabbis!

After the age of 30 Jesus started to speak publicly about what he believed in, and knew to be true!

Jesus said:

'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' And 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you..."Whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them... love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward in heaven will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High...

His main message was that one must love one another and that God loves you and is easy to reach. The Kingdom of God is within us! All we need to do is ask (with faith) and we shall receive!

Jesus fame grew!

Jesus believed that God could be reached by prayer and love. Once Jesus got very annoyed with money lenders in the temple which had been turned to a marketplace. Jesus angrily asked why they had turned the house of God into a den of thieves?

The Religious leaders were unhappy with what Jesus taught and asked the Roman Government to kill him.

Jesus had not broken any Roman law so the Romans were reluctant to take such a drastic step. The religious leader however persuaded Pilate a Roman governor to approve the nailing of Jesus on the cross!

Jesus was tortured and humiliated and he finally died on the cross...but wonder of wonders! He rose from the dead 3 days later. After 40 days, according to witnesses, Jesus ascended which means that he left the earth alive, by rising up into the sky.

Because of these miraculous happenings many people started to believe in Jesus and his teachings. The religious leaders tried to kill Jesus followers. They managed to kill those who followed Jesus, but were unable to defeat truth because the truth always triumphs.

Today many people across the world love Jesus and call themselves Christians.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

The Prodigal Son

Dear Children,

Jesus used to explain his teachings to his disciples with the help of parables.

Parables are stories but which have a deeper meaning.

Let me tell you one of them. It is called 'The prodigal son'

I would explain the word 'prodigal' as one who is wasteful or extravagant or uncontrolled.

Anyway to come back to the story, there was a man who had 2 sons. One son demanded from his father what was due to him, in the form of inheritance and went away to a distant land. There he squandered away all his money doing wrong things.

Finally he was left with nothing and was forced to take work looking after pigs.

The son realized that he had done wrong and decided to return to his father and ask for forgiveness. When the father saw the prodigal son coming towards him, he received him with open arms. He even asked that a grand feast be arranged to celebrate the return of the errant son.

The other son got angry when he heard this, but the father explained that it was right that they make merry as they had thought that the son was lost or dead and now they had found him alive!

This parable teaches us that God forgives those who repent. It also tells us about the Grace of God. Note that the father did not even wait for the son to say he was sorry. The father just saw him returning home and the father took him back into his home and heart! Is this story not comforting dear children? We all do wrong things and all God requires from us is that we repent. We must truly feel sorry for our actions, and not pretend. Why? Because God knows us better than we know ourselves and we cannot deceive him.

Will you remember this story when you do naughty things?

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

THE EIGHT-FOLD PATH THAT BUDDHA TAUGHT

Dear Children,

Last time, I told you about Siddhartha, who became the Buddha.

Today I shall tell you about what he taught.

Dear children,

I am not going to tell you a story today. But I shall introduce you to what the Great Buddha taught. Do you remember how Buddha went through so many difficulties? Well, he suffered so much in order to teach us the following rules. I shall try to explain them to you in an easy way. Every time, you are unhappy, look up the following rules, and you will realize what you have done wrong. You will then realize why you are unhappy, and what you can do to correct it. If you follow these rules, you will learn to be happy with yourself.

The rules are a little difficult, but you are bright children, so I know that you will be able to understand, what I am about to tell you.

Last time I told you how young Siddhartha figured out, that the best way to learn how to live, was through the middle way.

Not too much of luxury, not too much hardships

Not too much food, not too little food

Not too much work, not too little work

Not studying all the time, not playing all the time.

Buddha taught his followers 'The eight-fold Path'.

1) Right beliefs.

What do you believe in? Is it right? Or are you carried away by what your wayward friend advises?

I would say: Besides other good things you may believe, Believe in God, but most of all, believe in yourself.

You are God's creation. As such you are capable, good, kind and lovable.

Believe it!

2) Right aims.

What is it that you hope to achieve?

Maybe some of you would like to be doctors or scientists or pilots...

The list is endless. I would say be what you want to be, but add the quality of good and fair and compassionate and loving...

3) Right Speech.

Speak truthfully, clearly, sweetly, lovingly.

You will be able to get your point across, better, when you are calm, rather than when you are agitated.

4) Right conduct.

I would say, listen to your elders, Listen to those who are wiser than you, and have more experience than you do. Think in your mind, and pray for help as to how you should act. I believe that your prayers will be answered.

5) Right occupation.

According to me, 'right occupation' is, how you spend your time. It could also mean, the right way to earn a living. There is the right time, to do the right thing; and also, the right thing to do at the right time!

Is that difficult to understand? Think a little about it and you will. Understand, I mean.

6) Right effort.

The above, according to me, is very important. Have you heard the saying: 'God helps those, who help themselves?' Well, you can only leave the results to God, after you have put in your best efforts, right?

7) Right Thinking.

To think right is very important, dear children. And do you know how to think right? You think right by listening to your elders and teachers. Also by reading good books and practicing what you learn.

8) Right Concentration.

You know that when you are distracted and do not pay attention, you cannot learn anything. So you must learn to concentrate on the task at hand. Concentration can also mean meditation.

Dear children,

I repeat that I know that what I have not told you a story today. But I have introduced you to what the Great Buddha taught. Do you remember how Buddha went through so many difficulties? Well, he suffered so much in order to teach us the above rules. I have tried to explain them to you in an easy way. Every time, you are unhappy, look up the above rules, and you will realize what you have done wrong. You will then realize why you are unhappy, and what you can do to correct it. If you follow these rules, you will learn to be happy with yourself.

With love

Dadi Ma Nani- Ma

Bhagvad Gita

Dear Children,

There is a difference between the Shrimad Bhagvad and the Bhagvad Geeta.

The Shrimad Bhagvad is an ancient scripture in which is narrated the lives of the Incarnations of God, the most important being the lives of Sri Ram and Sri Krishna. It also deals with the Creation of the Universe. It exudes Knowledge and devotion. Its stories are full with moral, symbolic and practical value.

The Bhagvad Geeta is 'The Song of God'. It is pure philosophy and is a dialogue between Sri Krishna and His dear friend Arjuna, just before the great war of Mahabharata was fought.

The Bhagavad Geeta is part of the great Epic 'Mahabharata'.

Do you know that it is said that if anything happens in the world, it has its parallel in the Mahabhrata. So it teaches us which is the best way to do our duties in the world.

Dear Children,

If I were asked what I thought the message of the Geeta was in a sentence, I would say: "Do your best, and leave the rest".

What I mean by leaving the rest is that you must not waste your time worrying about your results once you have put in all your efforts on to a task.

Krishna teaches that one must face up to life's challenges and not to be a coward and run away from ones duties and responsibilities.

With love,

Dadi Ma Nani Ma

God's Home

Dear children,

Let me tell you one more story.

After God created the world, the people would not let Him rest in peace.

They would call him at odd times and complain to Him.

They would go to Him and not allow Him to rest.

Now what could God do? He wanted to hide, but where?

So He found the perfect hiding place.

He hid in everyone's heart.

People could not find Him, as they preferred to run after the pleasures of the world and never looked inside their hearts.

But those who looked for God in the love and kindness, that lives in the heart, they found Him there.

God lives in everyone's heart. God's home is in the heart of a Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jew, Sikh and every other religion of the world.

I am going to make you sit on my knee, and tell you something.

I am sure that you are intelligent enough to understand what I am about to say.

Do you know that the world is fighting about whose God is more powerful?

And the funny part is that God is One and the same for all and everyone knows it.

Yes it is true that Hindu gods have many names, but they all belong to one God.

The message of all religions is the same. Be it Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or any other faith. All the religions believe that God is All Powerful. God loves those, who love and help others. All religions believe that one must be compassionate, one must speak the truth and one must pray.

Then why are the grown-ups fighting? And killing each other? I am sure that God is not happy with what is happening. God does not want you to hurt someone because you

believe that Allah or Ram or Jesus is greater. They are all different names of the same God.

Dear children, you are going to be the leaders of tomorrow's world. And you must start thinking right. I am sure that some wrong things have happened.

Brothers and sisters fight, and that makes the parents very unhappy. What makes them happy is when you forgive, forget, kiss, make up and do not repeat the same mistake again.

Am I right?

MY VISION

Dear Children,
I have a vision.
Do you know what a vision is?
To see something that has not happened yet.
It is something that I wish will happen.
Do you know what my vision is?
That the world stops fighting.
That it stops arguing, about which religion leads you to God.
Because the truth is, that if you truly understand the message of God, It asks us to love one another.
And that different religions are different pathways that take us to the same destination.
And then, I have another vision.
And that vision is that you, my grand-children are going to fulfill that dream!
Because you are going to understand the message of God, the way, He intended it to be.
And that is, that there should be peace on earth.
That we may disagree on certain points, but that at no time, we resort to destroy, the home, in which we all live in together.
And do you know where, and what that home, is?
You have guessed right.
That Home is Earth.
And we have to preserve it.
And you, my children, have to perform that task.
And I am sure that my vision will be fulfilled!
With love,
Dadi-Ma Nani-Ma

BACK COVER

Shakun Narain Kimatrai began to write ‘Dadi Nani ki Kahaani’ for her grandson, Aditya.

Now she shares it with other children around the world. The book’s message: all religions impart the same thought. Of love, compassion and brotherhood...The need of the hour, it emphasizes is not only to ‘tolerate’ them but to ‘celebrate’ them. Shakun’s book includes the lives and teachings of Lord Krishna and Great Prophets like Jesus, Mohammed, Zarathustra, Mahavira, Buddha, Moses...aside from stories from Shrimad Bhagvad and Ramayana. Her dream: at least one page from her book is read at every school assembly hall...daily...to bring peace and instill values in our children – our future citizens and leaders.

This is her sixth book

Shakun Narain is one of the Founder Trustees and Chairperson of Women’s Movement for Peace and Prosperity (WMPP), an initiative launched with the active support of Times Foundation – a part of the well known Times of India Group. The Times Foundation’s vision is to enable non-government organizations in India working in areas of spiritual, moral, cultural and social development to maximize their efforts.

WMPP is a Movement initiated by dedicated volunteers to bring Peace and Prosperity in families and communities of this world. The Movement aims to connect with all ‘Good People’ to fulfill its vision.

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