

# Two Eternal Mothers – A Devotee of Lord Ram Shabari and A Devotee of Lord Krishna Sahajo Bai

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## Shabari, A Great Devotee of Lord Ram



## Foreword

While countless Saints, Mothers, and Sages have incarnated on this earth as devotees of the Lord, Shabari, a devotee of Lord Ram and Sahajo Bai, a devotee of Lord Krishna hold a unique place. By selflessly serving God while remaining immersed in His devotion, they have set an example of saintliness. I agree with the great literary figure of this era, Shri Sanjeev Kumar Srivastava, that most of our great religious historians have prioritized the realm of manhood in their literary works and poems. With a few exceptions, such as the literary work of great poet Maithili Sharan Gupta's 'Saket' and the great poet Awadhesh Kishore's 'Shramana', there are few such texts or poems that vividly depict the sacrifice, devotion, and dedication of Indian devotee women. Some great texts such as Maharishi Valmiki's 'Ramayana', Mahagoswami Tulsidas's 'Shri Ramcharitmanas', and Shri Keshavdas's 'Ramchandrika', do indeed mention some of the great women devotees of Sanatan Dharma, such as Mata Anusuiya and Mata Shabari, but their primary purpose has been to narrate folk tales.

The purpose of this story book, 'Two Eternal Mothers - Devotee of Lord Ram Shabari and Devotee of Lord Krishna Sahajo Bai', is to recount the life stories of a devotee of Lord Ram Shabari and a devotee of Lord Krishna Sahajo Bai. This work was created by the author after extensive research. Historians may or may not accept these facts. The author's intention is not to denigrate historians or hurt anyone's sentiments. These stories are based on various Samhitas of Rishies (Sages), Valmiki Ramayana, Shri Ramcharitmanas, Ramchandrika, Shramana by Shri Avdhesh Kishore, numerous articles and books on Shri Sant Charandas Ji, the literature of Sahjo Bai, countless folk tales, legends, and the words of Saints. We do hope that the author's efforts will definitely touch your heart.

## Prince Ram's First Birthday

This is a narration of a celebration when preparations were underway in Awadh to celebrate Prince Ram's first birthday. His father, the Emperor Dasharatha, and his three mothers, Kaushalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra, was overjoyed. By the King's orders, the city of Ayodhya was decorated like the heavens. Describing Ayodhya's beauty is like showing a lamp to the Sun, yet the descriptions of Ayodhya's beauty by the great sages are certainly worth remembering.

Situated on the banks of the Sarayu River, this beautiful city of Ayodhya arouses envy even in the hearts of the Gods. Ayodhya means a city of extreme beauty, security, strength, and invincibility. According to Maharishi Valmiki, Ayodhya was founded on the banks of the Sarayu River by Vaivasvata Manu, the son of the Sun. The scriptures do not mention its founding date, but it appears to have been established during the Satyayuga era. From this dynasty, the invincible Emperor Ikshvaku was born who made Ayodhya his capital. The descendant of this same Chakravarti Emperor Ikshvaku was the Chakravarti Emperor Dasharatha of the Treta Yuga who currently enthroned the kingdom of Ayodhya.

King Dasharatha's palace was adorned with divine gold and gems. The palace boasts beautifully cast floors of gems and precious stones in a variety of colors. A magnificent wall surrounds the palace, adorned with beautiful colorful cornices. Goswami Tulsidas says in Shri Ramcharitmanas that even the humble minds cannot describe the palace's beauty. Even the homes of ordinary residents were like sky-high mansions. The auspicious urns installed on the rooftops of each house seem to overshadow the Sun and Moon with their divine light. The gem-studded windows were so graceful as if the Sun God Himself was making His presence felt with His illumination. The coral-made thresholds and gem-studded pillars shine like the Sun even in the darkest nights. Every house had beautiful picture galleries of Gods and Goddesses that captivate even the hearts of Sages. Everyone's courtyards were adorned with gardens of different kinds of flowers in which beautiful and graceful creepers of many species were blooming like Spring.

A year ago, on this very day, on the ninth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Chaitra, Prince Rama was born. The beauty of Spring was at its peak. Undoubtedly, spring is the best of all seasons. Calling it the king of seasons is no exaggeration. New leaves were sprouting on the trees. Buds were blooming and turning into flowers. The sweet voice of the cuckoo appeared to expand the kingdom of music. The creepers seemed to embrace the trees. The kingdom of fragrance was spread all around by blooming extremely fragrant flowers. The mango trees were full of blossoms. The pollen falling from the flowers appeared as if Lord Indra himself was showering colorful gemstone powder. The humming sound of bumblebees hovering over the flowers and the dancing butterflies in the gardens were absolutely beautiful. The beauty of the yellow mustard flowers swaying in the fields was a sight to behold. It seemed as if the earth itself has donned a yellow sari.

Every home in Ayodhya was decorated like a grand festival on this occasion to celebrate first birthday of Lord Ram. After cleaning their homes, every citizen had decorated their doors with arches. Rangoli adorned the courtyards of their homes at various places. Ghee lamps were arranged in rows for night lighting. Garlands of lamps made from colorful glass pieces had been decorated to enhance the beauty and splendor of all the main places. This scenery was a sight to behold.

No words can describe the decoration of Maharaja Dasharatha's own palace on that day. The walls of the palace were adorned with exquisitely colored glass and mirrors. Beautiful ornamentation had been painted on the ceilings, floorboards and walls of the palace. Figures of religious deities had been inscribed on the walls. The entire palace had been decorated with various types of fragrant flowers. Gold ornamentation had been used for the decoration of the palace.

Maharaja Dasharatha had invited Gurudev Maharishi Vashisth along with Maharishi Shringi and other Sages to celebrate the first birthday of Prince Rama in Vedic manner. Finally, the moment arrived when Lord Rama was born, 12 noon. The entire atmosphere was immersed in enchanting of the

sound of recitation of Vedas by Maharishi Vashisth, Maharishi Shringi and all the sages.

जीवेम शरदः शतम्, बुध्येम शरदः शतम्, रोहेम शरदः शतम्, भवेम शरदः शतम्,  
भूयेम शरदः शतम्, भूयसीः शरदः शतात् ।

ओ३म् उप प्रियं पनिन्पतं युवानमाहुतीवृधम् ।  
अगन्म बिभ्रतो नमो दीर्घमायुः कृणोतु मे ॥  
ओ३म् इंद्र जीव सूर्य जीव देवा जीवा जीव्यासमहम् ।  
सर्वमायुर्जीव्यासम् ॥

ओ३म् आयुषायुः कृतां जीवायुष्मान जीव मा मृथाः ।  
प्राणेनात्मन्वतां जीव मा मृत्योरुदगा वशम् ॥  
ओ३म् शतं जीव शरदो वर्धमानः शतं हेमन्तान्छतमु वसन्तान ।  
शतमिन्द्राग्नी सविता बृहस्पतिः शतायुषा हविषेमं पुनर्दुः ॥  
शतं हेमन्तान्छतमु वसन्तान ।

शतमिन्द्राग्नी सविता बृहस्पतिः शतायुषा हविषेमं पुनर्दुः ॥  
ओ३म् सत्यामाशिषं कृणुता वयोधै कीरिं चिद्धवथ सवेभिरेवैः ।  
पश्चा मृधो अप भवन्तु विश्वास्तद रोदसी शृणुतं विश्वमिन्वे ॥  
ओं जीवास्थ जीव्यासं सर्वमायुर्जीव्यासम् ।  
ओं उपजीवा स्थोप जीव्यासं सर्वमायुर्जीव्यासम् ॥  
ओं सं जीवा स्थ सं जीव्यासं सर्वमायुर्जीव्यासम् ।  
ओं जीवला स्थ जीव्यासं सर्वमायुर्जीव्यासम् ॥

Jeevem Sharadah Shatam, Budhyem Sharadah Shatam.

Rohem Sharadah Shatam, Bhavem Sharadah Shatam.

Bhuyem Sharadah Shatam, Bhuyasi: Sharadah Shataat.

**Om Up Priyam Paninpatam Yuvanamahutivrudham.  
Agman Vibhrato Namō Deerghmaayuh Kranoti Me.  
Om indra Jeeva Surya Jeeva Deva Jeeva Jeevasamaham.  
Sarvmaayujeervyaasam.  
Om Ayushayuh Kratom Jeevayushman Jeev Maa Mrathaah.  
Praanenaatmanvatam Jeeva Ma Mrityorudga Vasham.  
Om Shatam Jeeva Sharado Vardhamanah Shatam  
Hemantanchatamu Vasantana.  
Shatmindragṇi Savita Brihaspatih Shatayusha Havishemam  
Punarduh.  
Shatam Hemantanchhatamu Vasantan.  
Shatmindragṇi Savita Brihaspatih Shatayusha Havishemam  
Punarduh.  
Om Satyamashisham Krunuta Vayodhai Keerin  
Chiddhyavath Savebhirevaih.  
Pashcha Mridho Up Bhavantu Vishvastad Rodasi Shrnutam  
Vishwaminve.  
Om Jeevastha Jeevyasam Sarvamayurjiviyasam.  
Om Upjeeva Sthop Jeevyasam Sarvmayurjeevyasam.  
Om Sam Jeev Stha Sam Jeevyasam Sarvmaayurjeevyasam.  
Om Jeevla Stha Jeevyasam Srvamayurjiviyasam.**

After the Puja ceremony was concluded, King Dasharatha opened his treasury to all the Rishi clans, Brahmins, and the poor. Each Rishi was given a thousand gold coins along with a hundred cows, and all Brahmins were decorated with a minimum of one hundred gold coins and ten cows.

The poor were bid farewell with gold and silver coins. A grand feast was organized providing food for all the citizens of the city.

This grand ceremony was being conducted under the guidance of Chief Minister Sumant. The program continued until four in the evening. Then, Maharaja Dasharatha and all the guests departed for their respective places in the guest house to rest. Chief Minister Sumant himself also departed for his home for a short rest.

As he was about to enter his house, the sound of horse's hooves caught his attention. He saw a distinguished officer on horseback who was injured approaching his house. As he approached closer, he recognized him. He was Anantdev, the administrative officer of the forest region.

He immediately approached Anantdev and helped him off the horse. He sent a soldier to call the royal physician. He carried him inside the house, laid him on the bed and gave him water to drink.

'How did you get into this state, Anantdev? Who dared to even raise a finger against the emperor's most respected military and administrative officer? Sumant asked.

After drinking cold water and resting for a while, Anantdev regained his energy. He said, 'O Chief Minister, the demons have once again created havoc in the forest region. They attack us all of a sudden. They selectively killed all our spies preventing us from knowing their plans. Surprised by their sudden attacks, our soldiers are unable to prepare to face them and thus face defeat. We have tried our level best to strengthen the intelligence system but every move backfired. Most of our security personnel are killed in this attack. I challenged them myself. I too was injured. Somehow, I managed to turn my horse towards Ayodhya so that I could inform you about the actual situation. Luckily, I was able to reach you alive.'

Sumant Ji fell into deep thought. Anantdev Ji had spoken the truth. It was indeed the failure of our intelligence system that prevented us from timely detecting enemy plans and our security forces suffer heavy losses from

surprise attacks of enemies. He was contemplating how to strengthen his intelligence system when the royal physician arrived. The royal physician immediately administered first aid to Anantdev Ji. Convinced that only the Maharaja himself and Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha Ji could provide a solution to this critical problem, Chief Minister Sumant Ji immediately departed for the palace accompanied with Anantdev Ji. After arriving in the guest room of the palace, Sumant Ji ordered a soldier to inform Maharaja Dashrath that Sumant Ji wished to discuss a very important matter. The Maharajadhiraja immediately left his room for the guest room. An invitation was also extended to Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha Ji, requesting him to join the meeting, if possible. Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha Ji's life was completely dedicated to the Nation. If the Nation faced a problem and needed his help in resolving it, it was impossible for Maharishi Vashishtha to not make an effort to attend.

Upon Maharishi Vashishtha's arrival, Anantdev Ji informed the Maharaja and Maharishi about all the events in the forest. Everyone agreed on the same thing, 'Strengthen the intelligence system.' Suddenly, a smile spread across Maharishi Vashishtha's face and he said, 'The Lila of the Lord is great. Maharishi Shringi is also present in the city, invited to celebrate Prince Ram's first birthday. He should be respectfully invited to participate in this discussion.'

A soldier was immediately sent to Maharishi Shringi's guest house with this message from Gurudev Vashishtha. Upon hearing Maharishi Vashishtha's message, Maharishi Shringi immediately headed for the palace guest house.

Upon reaching the guest house, Maharishi Vashishtha and the Maharaja Dashrath honored him and seated him on a high seat. Chief Minister Sumant Ji and Anantdev Ji informed him about the problems of the forest area.

After listening to the problem and obtaining everyone's consent, Maharishi Shringi Ji said, 'Maharishi Vashishtha Ji, Maharaj Ji, Chief Minister Ji, and Anantdev Ji, no doubt there is an urgent need to strengthen the intelligence system. To strengthen the intelligence system, first and

foremost, a capable intelligence expert is needed who can provide leadership. As it appears to me, such an intelligence expert is not present in your court. You can only find such an intelligence expert from Maharshi Bharadwaj's Gurukul. His Gurukul has a special provision for teaching this art, and as far as I know, he has given special training to Kurtaki. If Kurtaki's services are retained through Maharshi Bharadwaj Ji, your intelligence system can be strengthened under her leadership.'

'Thank you, thank you', everyone chanted. Maharaj Dashrath then requested the audience that who should be sent to Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul Prayag to seek Kurtaki's services from him for Ayodhya. Gurudev Maharishi Vashisth stood up from his seat with folded hands and addressing Maharishi Shringi said, 'O Maharishi, Maharishi Bhardwaj respects you immensely and never refuses any of your requests. I humbly request that if you can go to Prayag, this task will surely become possible.'

Hearing the words of revered Sage Maharishi Vashishtha, Maharishi Shringi also immediately stood up from his seat and said, 'O great Sage, your instruction is your command for me. I will leave from here very soon for Maharishi Bharadwaj's ashram in Prayag and will certainly request him to provide Kurtaki's services to the nation of Ayodhya.'

Hearing his sweet words, Maharaja Dashrath immediately instructed Sumant Ji to make appropriate arrangements for Maharishi Shringi ji's visit to Prayag.

## Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul in Prayag

Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul, located in Prayag Raj on the banks of the Ganges River, was considered the world's largest educational institution at that time. Hundreds of students from India and abroad were studying in his Gurukul. Maharishi Bharadwaj granted admission to his Gurukul based solely on the student's merit without any discrimination based on caste or gender. His Gurukul taught subjects ranging from Ayurveda, weaponary, musical instruments, to the Vedas and Vedanta. He divided the Gurukul into ten departments where appropriate teachers imparted knowledge related to each field. These ten departments were: Agriculture, Water Science, Mineral Science, Ship Building Science, Chariot Building Science, Fire Science, Veshm Science, Prakara Science, City Planning, and Mechanical Science.

नानाविधानां वस्तूनां यंत्राणां कल्पसंपदा ।  
धातूनां साधनानां च वस्तूनां शिल्पसंज्ञितम् ॥  
कृषिर्जलं खनिश्चेति धातुखण्डं त्रिधाभिधम् ॥  
नौका-रथाग्नियानानां, कृतिसाधनमुच्ये ।  
वेश्म, प्राकार, नगर रचना वास्तु संज्ञितम् ॥

Nanavidhanaam Vastunam Yantranam Kalpsampada.  
Dhatunam Sadhnam Cha Vastunam Shilpsangyatim.  
Krishijalan Khanishcheti Dhatukhandam Tridhaabhidham.  
Nauka-Rathagniyananan, Kritisadhanamuchye.  
Veshm, Prakar, Nagar Rachana Vastu Sangyatim.

A few years ago, the Department of Mechanical Engineering conducted research on building an aircraft for Lord Kubera and built the Pushpak Viman. A complete description of its construction is given in the Gurukul's magazine, 'Yantra Sarvasva.' It was heard that Ravana, the king of Lanka, defeated Lord Kubera in battle and snatched this Pushpak Viman from him and was using it for his own service.

New medicines were constantly invented in the Gurukul's Ayurvedic laboratories. The Rishies had researched medicines that caould keep ordinary people disease-free and keep them alive for more than hundred years. Their Gurukul had no equal in the knowledge of the Vedas and Vedanta all over the world. Who can be more knowledgeable of the Vedas than Maharishi Bharadwaj who got knowledge directly from Lord Brahma Himself who composed the sutras of the Rigveda?

## The Great Sage Bharadwaj

The scriptures describe him as the son of the sage Utthaya and the guru of the gods, Brihaspati. His mother is Mamta Devi.

योऽङ्गारेय ऋषिजमङ्गे तस्य पुरो बृहस्पतः ।

बृहस्पतेभमरद्वाजोषविथीषत य उच्यते ॥

**Yonkgareya Rishijamjye Tasya Puro Brihaspasthah  
Brihaspatibhamardvajoshvithishat Ya Uchyate.**

Maharishi Bharadwaj was the son of Brihaspati, the Guru of the Gods, and Mamta Devi, born from their love affair. Fearing social ostracism, his mother Mamta Devi handed him over to the Marudganas for upbringing. The Rigveda mentions the Marudganas are highly learned (prachetas marut), visionaries (doore drish), great poets and literary figures (kavay marut), highly skilled and fierce warriors (ugra marut), and capable of uprooting the enemy (sumaya marut). Under the protection and teachings of such virtuous Marudganas, Bharadwaj's sharp intellect enabled him to acquire all knowledge of religious scriptures within a short period of time. Accepting the Marudganas' request, Suryadev made him his disciple and taught him weapons and instruments. Indradev also accepted him as his disciple and imparted him with Ayurveda. The Marudganas then commanded him to worship Lord Brahma. Pleased with Bharadwaj's devotion, Lord Brahma appeared and bestowed upon him the knowledge of all the Vedas and Vedanta.

At that time, the earth was ruled by the Chakravarti Emperor Bharat. He was married to the three daughters of King Vidarbha and had nine sons. According to Bharat, none of these sons was suitable to succeed him. Emperor Bharat desired to have a son as valorous as himself who would succeed him to the throne. His royal priest and spiritual guru, Maharishi Dirghatamas advised him to perform the 'Marutsoma Yagna' to appease the Maruts. Maharishi Dirghatamas told him that to get such a son was possible only through the 'Putrayeshti Yagna' performed by his half-

brother Bharadwaj. He should perform the 'Marutsoma Yagna' and appease the Maruts. He should ask for a boon from them to have Bharadwaj as his adopted son. Bharadwaj then would perform the 'Putrayeshti Yagna' for him to get a son as desired by Emperor Bharat.

On the instructions of his Guru, Emperor Bharat then performed the 'Marutsoma Yagna'. Pleased with this yajna, the Maruts gifted their adopted son Bharadwaj to Emperor Bharat. After becoming Bharat's adopted son, Bharadwaj performed the 'Putrayeshti Yagna' for him. This resulted in the birth of a great warrior son named Asit, who succeeded Bharat and became the emperor by performing the 'Ashwamedha Yagna'. The scriptures state that Emperor Bharat wanted to make Bharadwaj his crown prince but he declined. He requested Emperor Bharat to make Prince Asit his crown prince. Upon his suggestion and with the permission of his Guru, Maharishi Dirghatamas, he declared Prince Asit as the crown prince. Bharadwaj expressed his desire to tour India. With the Emperor's permission, he first visited the Govardhan mountain in the land of Braj. At that time, Govardhan mountain was treeless due to the curse of Maharishi Pulastya.

## **Maharishi Pulastya's Curse on Mount Govardhan**

Once while on a pilgrimage, Maharishi Pulastya arrived at Mount Dronachal. He was delighted to see his son Govardhan and was impressed by his beauty and grandeur. He requested Mount Dronachal to take Govardhan with him to his Ashram in Kashi.

Maharishi Pulastya said to Mount Dronachal, 'O Dronachal, you know that I live in Kashi. I want to take your son Govardhan with me.'

Mount Dronachal was deeply saddened on this request by great Sage. But persuaded by his son Mount Govardhan, he granted permission.

Before leaving for Kashi, Mount Govardhan said to Maharishi Pulastya, 'O Lord, I am very large and heavy. How will you carry me to Kashi?'

Maharishi Pulastya offered to carry him on his palm using his strength and power.

Govardhan, bowing to Maharishi Pulastya's yogic power, said, 'O Lord, I have a small condition. If you place me somewhere after holding me in your palm, I will settle there.'

Maharishi Pulastya accepted Govardhan Mountain's request and placing Govardhan Mountain on his palm, departed for Kashi. When Maharishi Pulastya reached Braj, Govardhan Mountain thought, 'Lord Krishna will be born on this earth in the Dwapar Yuga and will graze cows here. If he stays here, he will attain salvation with the blessings of Lord Krishna.'

Thinking this, Govardhan Mountain increased its weight considerably. Unable to bear its weight, Maharishi Pulastya placed it in the land of Braj. Now, once placed on the earth as promised to Govardhan Mountain by Sage Pulastya, he could not take it back to his palm.

Maharishi Pulastya was enraged by Govardhan Mountain's deceit. Enraged, he cursed Mount Govardhan, 'O Govardhan, you have deceived

me. I curse you as punishment. All your beauty will be destroyed. You will become treeless and your size will continually diminish.'

Hearing the curse, Govardhan began to weep. He fell at the feet of Maharishi Pulastya and said, 'O Lord, you are omniscient. You know that Lord Vishnu himself will be born here in the form of Krishna in the Dwapar era. When the Lord will need to take the support of a mountain to shatter Indra's pride, that mountain will be me. It is only by the Lord's Will that the desire to establish myself here has arisen in my heart. I am not at fault. Please forgive me and free me from the curse.'

Hearing Govardhan's words, Maharishi Pulastya awakened his divine vision and realized the truth. He realized that this happened due to the Will of Lord Vishnu that Govardhan came to the land of Braj. He was only a medium. On one hand, he felt the joy of being helpful in God's work, but on the other hand, he was sad on cursing an innocent. Maharshi Pulastya found himself in a precarious situation. He began to apologize to God for cursing Govardhan. A thought struck to him then and he said to Govardhan, 'O son, a curse cannot be taken back. The words uttered by a Brahmin are like arrows shot from a quiver that cannot be taken back. But in time, Bharadwaja, son of Guru Brihaspati, will arrive here and free you from the curse'.

Seeing the treeless Govardhan mountain, Bharadwaj felt pity. He began to worship Lord Vishnu and humbly called out to the Lord, 'O Lord, you are going to incarnate on this earth in the Dwapar Yuga, and this very Govardhan mountain will provide you shelter in times of need. Therefore, alleviate his dilemma and grant him the boon of beauty again'.

Delighted with his selfless penance, Lord Vishnu himself appeared before him and freed Govardhan mountain from the curse of Maharishi Pulastya.

Having freed Govardhan mountain from the curse of Lord Vishnu, Bharadwaj set off for the Himalayas. On the Himalayan mountain, about 3,000 yards above sea level, he saw a truly beautiful spot.

The beauty of the place captivated his heart. Natural splendor was scattered everywhere. It seemed as if Nature was lavishly showering its precious treasures. The snow-capped mountain ranges created a wonderful atmosphere. The morning Sun's rays enhanced its beauty. Sky-touching trees like cedar and pine trees enhanced the beauty of the place. Small rivers, lakes, trees, animals, and birds all combined to create a stunning natural scenery. Bhardwaj Ji was so engrossed in this place that he decided to make his residence in a nearby cave and meditate. He became absorbed in the meditation of Lord Vishnu.

Time passed as he was immersed in meditation. When his meditation ended, India was ruled by the Chakravarti Emperor Bhagiratha. Emperor Bhagiratha, through intense penance had appeased Mother Ganga and persuaded Her to come to earth from heaven. His ancestors had been reduced to ashes by the curse of Kapil Muni. Emperor Bhagiratha performed this intense penance to liberate them by bringing Mother Ganga to earth. The place where Mother Ganga came to earth from heaven was Gangotri, a short distance from Bhardwaj Ji's meditation site. The gurgling sound of the Ganges River attracted his attention. Upon reaching Gangotri, he saw a beautiful nymph bathing in the Ganges, half-naked. His heart was captivated by this beautiful nymph. When the beautiful nymph emerged from the Ganges' lap after bathing, Bharadwaj Ji proposed to her. The nymph, deeply impressed by Bharadwaj's radiance and beauty accepted his proposal. This nymph was Ghritachi, a devotee of Mother Ganga. After Mother Ganga's return to earth, she came to earth to bathe in Ganga's lap in love with her. With Mother Ganga's blessings, the two entered into a Gandharva marriage and settled there. Time passed. They had a son, whom they named Drona. Ghritachi began to miss her heavenly abode intensely and one day, she secretly left Bharadwaj and went back to heaven.

With Ghritachhi's sudden departure, Bharadwaj's heart also became distraught with this place. Taking the young child Drona with him, he descended from the lofty peaks of the Himalayas to the plains of Mother Ganga. His first stop was Kashi. He worshipped Lord Shiva intensely here. Pleased with his devotion, Lord Shiva appeared and ordered him to establish a Gurukul in Prayagraj. Prayag was then a small village on the

banks of the Ganga. Following Lord Shiva's orders, Bharadwaj came to Prayag and established a Gurukul there. In due course, he married Princess Sushila and began running the Gurukul. In the Treta Yuga, this Gurukul was world famous and remained the single largest educational institution in the entire world.

## Kurtaki

As mentioned above, it was found in a consultation between Maharishi Shringi, Maharishi Vashisth, King Dasharatha, Chief Minister Sumant, and Shri Anant Dev, that the reason of inability to stop the demons' rampage was due to the lack of a proper intelligence service of the Kingdom in that area. To strengthen the intelligence system, it was decided to employ the services of Kurtaki, a disciple of Maharishi Bhardwaj, an expert in espionage and a master of weapons. Maharishi Shringi was sent to Maharishi Bhardwaj's Ashram for this purpose.

Acharya Kurtaki, Maharishi Bhardwaj's disciple and daughter of Maharishi Kurtuk was the head of the Agniyan Shastra department at the Prayag Gurukul and the Vice-Chancellor of the Prayag Gurukul. She was considered an expert in weaponry knowledge, research on new types of weapons, and espionage within the Gurukul. Furthermore, her knowledge of Ayurveda and Yantra Shastra was unparalleled. She played a key role in the construction of the Pushpak Viman. He also invented deadly weapons like the Agni-Vaan. She was considered the successor of Maharishi Bharadwaj.

Maharishi Kurtuk's Ashram was located in the Himalayan mountain range, about 200 miles from Leh city in Ladakh. Maharishi Kurtuk, a disciple of Maharishi Vashisth had recently played a significant role in the Dasragya war. Along with Maharishi Kurtuk, his teenage daughter Kurtaki's military prowess was a sight to behold in this war. It was here that Maharishi Vashisth, impressed by her talent granted her the boon of attaining salvation through Lord Vishnu's incarnation Shri Ram in the Treta Yuga.

## The Dasragy Battle

Whenever a thought of this fierce Dasragy battle came into the mind of Acharya Kurtaki, it shuddered her. While ten of the world's most powerful emperors of that time participated in this war, it was particularly fought under the leadership of two great accomplished Sages, the Sage Vishvamitra on one side and the Sage Vashishtha on the other.

Prajapati's son was Emperor Kusha. He had a son named Kushanabha. The Emperor Kushanabha's son was Emperor Gadhi. The mighty and valiant Vishvarath (later named Vishvamitra) was the son of Emperor Gadhi. After Emperor Gadhi accepted the Vanaprastha Ashram, prince Vishvarath ascended the throne.

On his way to conquer the world, Emperor Vishvarath once visited the Ashram of Maharishi Vashishtha with his army. At that time Maharishi Vashishtha was performing a Yajna immersed in devotion to the God. Emperor Vishvarath bowed to him and sat down. After completing the Yagna, Maharishi Vashisth warmly welcomed Emperor Vishvarath and requested him to stay at his Ashram for a few days. Emperor Vishvarath thought that he had a large army with him. It would be extremely difficult for Maharishi Vashisth to host him along with his army. Therefore, Emperor Vishvarath humbly requested permission to leave. However, upon Maharishi Vashisth's earnest request, he accepted his hospitality for a few days. Maharishi Vashisth invoked Mother Cow Kamadhenu. With the Mother's grace, six types of dishes were immediately prepared for Emperor Vishvarath and his army, along with all kinds of comforts and conveniences. Emperor Vishvarath and his entire army were delighted by Maharishi Vashisth's hospitality.

Emperor Vishvarath was astonished to witness the miracle of Mother Cow Kamadhenu. With the intention of obtaining Mother Cow, he said to Maharishi Vashisth, 'O Sage, cows like Kamadhenu should not be owned by forest dwellers, but by Emperors. Therefore, please give her to me. I can give you thousands of gold coins in exchange.'

Maharishi Vashisth replied, 'O King, this cow is my life, my Mother. How can I sell my Mother?'

When Maharishi Vashisth refused to give Mother cow, Emperor Vishvarath filled with pride ordered his military to seize the cow by force. His soldiers began chasing Mother cow. Mother cow Kamadhenu somehow freed Herself from the soldiers' captivity and came to Maharishi Vashisth and began lamenting.

Maharishi Vashisth said, 'O Mother cow, Emperor Vishvarath is my guest. I cannot curse him nor I can defeat his vast army. I feel helpless.'

Hearing these words, Mother Cow Kamadhenu said, 'O Brahmarshi, the strength of a Kshatriya can never be superior to the strength of a Brahmin. Please give me permission. I will destroy this Kshatriya king along with his vast army in a moment.'

Seeing no other option, Maharishi Vashisth granted Mother cow Kamadhenu permission to fight Emperor Vishvarath.

Upon receiving permission, Mother cow Kamadhenu created an army of Pahnava soldiers through Her yogic powers. That army began fighting with the Emperor Vishvarath's army. Emperor Vishvarath destroyed the entire Pahnava army with his valor. Seeing Her army being destroyed, Mother cow Kamadhenu created thousands of Shaka, Hun, Barvar, Yavana, and Kamboj soldiers. Emperor Vishvarath killed those soldiers as well. Then Mother cow Kamadhenu gave birth to mighty warriors equipped with extremely powerful lethal weapons who quickly started cutting down the enemy army like carrots and radishes. Seeing the destruction of his army, Emperor Vishvarath's hundred sons became extremely angry and ran to kill Maharishi Vashishtha. Maharishi Vashishtha reduced all of them to ashes except one son. Emperor Vishvarath was deeply saddened by the destruction of his army and sons, and accepted defeat in the war and returned to his capital.

Emperor Vishvarath thought that all his powers were far more subtle than those of a Brahmin and therefore, he would have to acquire siddhis

(powers) to take revenge on Maharishi Vashisth. Handing over the throne to his son, he went to the caves of the Himalayas to perform penance. Through rigorous penance, Emperor Vishvarath pleased Lord Shiva and received the boon of getting complete archery along with divine powers.

Thus, having acquired complete knowledge of archery, Emperor Vishvarath reached Maharishi Vashisth's ashram. Challenging him with a spirit of revenge. Emperor Vishvarath fired an arrow of fire towards Ashram of Sage Vashisth. The arrow set ablaze the entire Ashram. The inhabitants fled in fear. Maharishi Vashisth also took up his bow and said, 'Emperor Vishvarath, I am standing before you, attack me. I will shatter your pride today and show you that Brahmin's powers are far superior to Kshatriya's powers.

Enraged Emperor Vishvaratha released all the divine weapons such as Agneyastra, Varunastra, Rudraastra, Indraastra and Pashupatastra. These were simultaneously destroyed en route by Maharishi Vashisth with his lethal weapons. Emperor Vishwaratha became even more angry and released other divine weapons such as 'Manav', 'Mohan', 'Gandharva', 'Jumbhan', 'Daran', 'Vajra', 'Brahmapash', 'Kalpash', 'Varunpash', 'Pinak', 'Dand', 'Paishach', 'Kraunch', 'Dharmachakra', 'Kaalchakra', 'Vishnuchakra', 'Vayavya', 'Manthan', 'Skeleton', 'Musele', 'Vidyadhar', 'Kalastra' etc. This made Maharishi Vashishtha furious and he raised his bow to release Brahmastra after destroying all those divine weapons of Emperor Vishwarath. All the Gods, men, women, eunuchs etc got scared. The whole world started writhing in pain due to the fierce light and sky piercing sound of Brahmastra. All the Sages, Gods, etc began to pray to him and said, O great Sage, you have defeated Emperor Vishvaratha. Please douse the flames emanating from the Brahmastra now.'

Moved by their prayers, he called back the Brahmastra and pacified it with Mantras.

Defeated Emperor Vishvaratha sat on the ground like a snake without a gem and thought, 'Undoubtedly, Brahmin's powers are superior to Kshatriya's powers. Through penance, I should attain the status of a Brahmin and the brilliance of Brahmatva.'

Thinking thus, he set off towards the South for penance. While performing penance, he gave up food and began to live only on fruits. After many years of penance, Brahma appeared and said, 'O Rajrishi, you have conquered all the worlds with your penance. Ask for a boon. Due to the power of your penance, you have earned the title of Rajrishi. Now the entire Universe will address you as Rajrishi Vishwamitra.'

After seeking the boon of various divine weapons from Brahma, he once again planned a war with Maharishi Vashisth to quench his urge for revenge. Thus, Dasragya war was born as the plot of Rajrishi Vishwamitra to take revenge from Maharishi Vashishtha.

Rajrishi Vishwamitra gathered ten kings of India who were also angry with Maharishi Vashisth or the Hasti Emperor Sudas, who was protected by him, for one reason or another. Among them were the Dasyu Emperor Bheda, the Nuri (part of modern Afghanistan) Emperor Alin, the Parushni (modern Ravi River Valley) Emperor Anu, the Betaab Valley Emperor and Rishi Bhrigu, a descendant of Maharishi Bhrigu, the Bolan Pass Emperor Bhalan, the Gandhara Emperor Druhyu, the Shalva Emperor Matsya, the Parthia (modern Iran) Emperor Parasu, the Saraswati River Valley Emperor Puru, and the Scythian Emperor Pani.

A fierce battle was declared against Emperor Sudas and his protector, the sage Vashisth. A location on the banks of the Ravi River was chosen for the battle.

Emperor Sudas was distraught by this declaration of war. Spies informed him that this group of ten kingdoms possessed a combined army of 66,000 infantry, 200 chariots, 2,000 cavalry, and 50 elephants, while Emperor Sudas possessed only 6,500 infantries. Emperor Sudas possessed only a handful of battle-trained horses and elephants. Maharishi Vashisth consoled him and imparted the wisdom, 'Satyameva Jayate'. Maharishi Vashishtha explained to him that this war was being forced upon us without any provocation from us. He said, 'Emperor Sudas, you are a Kshatriya. You cannot escape from this war. Let me lead this war, victory will surely be yours.'

Emperor Sudas began preparing for the war entrusting Maharishi Vashishtha with the leadership of the war operations.

Maharishi Vashishtha faced two problems. If Rajrishi Vishwamitra used divine weapons in battle, he knew how to counter them. Maharishi Agastya's brother Maharishi Vashisth had been taught the antidote to all types of divine weapons by Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu. He believed that Rajrishi Vishwamitra was certainly aware of this and would not use divine weapons. If he fought with conventional weapons, it would be unethical for Maharishi Vashisth to use divine weapons. In such a situation, how could he face such a huge army of ten kings, almost ten times the size of Emperor Sudas protected and led by Rajrishi Vishwamitra? He then thought of Maharishi Kurtuk. He immediately sent one of his disciples to Maharishi Kurtuk's Ashram in Kurtuk, Ladakh, inviting him to participate in this battle.

Maharishi Vashishtha knew that the armies of these ten kings possessed traditional weapons made of wood and stone. Maharishi Kurtuk had invented iron weapons, including spears, swords, and arrows. Maharishi Vashishtha believed that the impact of these iron weapons would be unbearable for the enemy army and would inevitably be overwhelmed.

Maharishi Kurtuk was a talented disciple of Maharishi Vashishtha. Impressed by his talent, Maharishi Vashishtha bestowed upon him the title of 'Maharishi' and granted him permission to establish his own independent Ashram in Ladakh. He established his Ashram in the beautiful Himalayan valleys of Ladakh, which became known as Kurtuk.

Upon hearing Maharishi Vashisth's message, Maharishi Kurtuk immediately began preparing for his departure to Hasti. He knew that Maharishi Vashishtha would need his invented iron weapons to participate in this war. Therefore, he planned his journey with all the iron weapons, arrows, spears, and swords available at the time. He took his daughter Kurtaki along. The highly talented and sharp-minded Kurtaki had invented these weapons with her father and was highly skilled in their use.

Maharishi Kurtuk arrived at Hasti and met his Guru Maharishi Vashisth with prostrations. He then introduced his daughter Kurtaki to Maharishi Vashishtha. He placed his iron weapons before Maharishi Vashishtha. These weapons were in short supply, so it was necessary to increase their number. At Maharishi Vashisth's command, blacksmiths from across the kingdom immediately were gathered and instructed to forge weapons under the guidance of Maharishi Kurtuk and his daughter Kurtaki. The blacksmiths' day and night hard work quickly produced a stockpile of weapons.

At the appointed time, Emperor Sudas's army arrived at the battlefield on the banks of the Ravi River and camped in a clean area. Sage Vashishtha requested Sage Kurtuk to assume the responsibility of commander in chief of the army of Emperor Sudas. Following Sage Vashishtha's orders, father Kurtuk and daughter Kurtaki began planning the battle and devising a battle array.

Sage Vishwamitra selected Emperor Anu to lead his army. King Anu, the Parushni emperor was the emperor of this Ravi River region and was considered an expert in the art of war. Until the second half of the night, Sage Vishwamitra discussed war strategy with all the emperors in the camp. Then, saying that the next day was going to be very fierce, all of you should get some rest, Sage Vishwamitra retired to his camp to rest.

Lying on his bed in his camp, Sage Vishwamitra tried to fall asleep. He could not sleep. Old memories were raging in his mind. The humiliation of being defeated twice by Sage Vashisth constantly made him feel angry and remorseful.

He felt a profound sense of relief at the thought that tomorrow he would avenge all his insults. He had a force of 66,000 armed forces, while Emperor Sudas only has 6,500. A smile spread across his face. He would crush enemy army like a carrot and radish. He would also martyr Emperor Sudas.

But Maharishi Vashisth? No, no. My aim was not to martyr him but to capture him to avenge my insult and obtain the Kamadhenu cow from him.

He thought that he had already ordered the commander, Emperor Anu, and all the emperors in his army not to cause any physical harm to Maharishi Vashisth but to capture him and present Sage Vashishtha before him.

Just then, a wave of sleep overcame him. He saw Lord Brahma standing before him. He seemed to be in a somewhat angry mood.

'O King Sage, do not use the divine weapons which I have given to you in tomorrow's battle. If you do so, Vashisth will deliver a fierce retaliation that will be devastating to the entire universe. If this happens, I will curse you severely', said Lord Brahma.

Hearing these harsh words of Lord Brahma, Sage Vishwamitra got up in a panic mood.

In the camp of Sage Vashisth also, Sage Vashisth, Emperor Sudas, commander in chief Sage Kurtuk and Kurtaki were discussing war strategy.

Maharishi Vashisth said, 'Sage Vishwamitra's army of ten emperors has ten times the strength of ours. We are unable to defeat them in a direct battle. We will have to carefully formulate a war strategy.'

Then a smile appeared on Kurtaki's face.

'Of course, Maharishi. This war is an example of falsehood imposed on truth. Victory must be achieved by any means. By any means, force, punishment, discrimination, and even deceit, if necessary,' said Kurtaki.

'Sure daughter, but what is going through your mind?' asked her father Maharishi Kurtuk curiously.

Kurtaki then laid out her entire strategy.

'Two miles away from the regular battle field on the banks of the Ravi River lies a huge mountain range. One has to pass through a narrow path to enter this area. Our soldiers will be stationed on the heights of this

mountain range to enter into this area equipped with modern iron weapons, arrows, spears, and swords. Our two hundred horsemen will approach the enemy army and pretend to attack them. But as soon as the enemy army attacks them, our horsemen will leave the battlefield and flee towards the mountain range in this valley. The enemy army will not have a chance to understand our plan, so they will pursue our soldiers in this battle environment to kill them in retaliation. As soon as our soldiers pass through this narrow passage and the enemy soldiers attempt to enter, our soldiers will attack them from the high mountain range with their modern weapons. This will undoubtedly cause a huge loss to the enemy army. It is hoped that they will become disheartened by the destruction of their army and will flee the battlefield. If they flee, it will be very difficult to gather them and we will likely be victorious.' Kurtaki explained her plan.

The camp echoed with the applause of Maharishi Vashishtha accompanied by the words, 'Thank you, thank you.'

'There is certainly a little deceit in this plan but everything is justified for victory in war and love when we are fighting a deceitful war. Daughter, carry out your plans My blessings are with you. If Sage Vishwamitra uses any divine weapons, leave it to me. I am capable of giving a befitting reply and I vow that it will not cause any harm to our army,' Maharishi Vashistha said praising Kurtaki.

Thus, began the world's first "guerrilla warfare" plan.

After receiving everyone's consent and blessings, Kurtaki summoned the leaders of her army's various units in the second quarter of the night and informed them of the entire battle plan. By the fourth quarter of the night, all the soldiers were deployed at their respective positions, armed with weapons.

The next day, anticipating the start of a fierce battle, the enemy army under the leadership of Emperor Anu organized by Sage Vishwamitra, arrived at the designated battle site. The enemy army looked like a flood with no end in sight.

As per plan, Emperor Sudas's two hundred horsemen appeared before Emperor Anu's army eager for battle. But as soon as Emperor Anu declared war, encouraging his army with the word 'Attack', these horsemen began to flee. Their desertion sparked a wave of joy in the enemy army. They took this as a sign of victory and rushed to capture these horsemen and kill them. This was precisely what Kurtaki wanted.

As the enemy army reached the narrow entrance of the mountain range, a devastating scene was unfolded. Arrows and spears were pelted on the enemy army from all sides. They were at a loss to know from where this attack was coming. They had not anticipated this type of attack with various other weapons. The battle had only lasted four or five hours when the enemy army panicked and scattered, fleeing for their lives. Emperor Anu and his fellow emperors tried desperately to bolster their army's morale, but were completely unable. When nearly the entire army had fled, some of Maharishi Kurtuk's soldiers attacked the remaining army with swords.

Thus, the enemy's veterans were unable to withstand Maharishi Kurtuk's formations and the iron weapons of his army. Within a few hours, the battle was over. The enemy army was thoroughly defeated. In this battle which lasted only a few hours, approximately 10,000 enemy soldiers were martyred, while only 500 soldiers of Emperor Sudas's army were martyred. Six emperors of the enemy army were also martyred in this battle. Emperor Sudas granted amnesty to the remaining four emperors and ordered them to settle at least 200 Kos away from the scene.

Disheartened by this terrible defeat and fearing that Emperor Sudas's soldiers might capture him, Sage Vishwamitra fled the battlefield and went underground. It was said that he went to the caves of the Himalayas to perform penance again hoping to attain the honor and position of 'Brahmarishi'.

Following this victory, Emperor Sudas established a united India under the guidance of Maharishi Vashisth.

Maharishi Vashishtha and Emperor Sudas gave the entire credit of victory in this war to Maharishi Kurtuk and his daughter Kurtaki and planned their farewell by giving them a large portion of the treasury with respect. Before returning to Ladakh, Maharishi Kurtuk requested Maharishi Vashishtha to see his old friend Maharishi Bharadwaj by visiting his Gurukul in Prayag. Maharishi Vashishtha respectfully sent him off to Prayag with a hundred soldiers to accompany him on the journey for his security.

## **Maharishi Kurtuk and Kurtaki's Departure to Prayag**

Two chariots equipped with special amenities were arranged for Maharishi Kurtuk and his daughter Kurtaki to travel to Gurukul of Sage Bhardwaj to Prayag. Maharishi Vashishtha and Emperor Sudas personally saw them off at the doorstep out of respect accompanied by a hundred horsemen, a substantial portion of the treasury as dakshina and adequate food arrangements for the journey. They were instructed to escort Maharishi Kurtuk and his daughter Kurtaki to Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul in Prayag and then safely to the Maharshi Kurtuk's Ashram in Ladakh.

Kurtuki left her chariot and boarded the chariot of her father eager to talk to her father. She respectfully greeted him and sat beside him. Kurtaki was filled with immense love for her father. Like a little girl resting her head on his shoulder, she eagerly asked her father, O father, you have told me a lot about Gurudev Vashishtha, but did not tell me how did you become friends with Maharishi Bharadwaj? I am very curious to know that. If you think it appropriate, please tell me in detail about your friendship with Maharishi Bharadwaj'.

Kurtaki's mother passed away when she was a child. After her mother's death, her father shouldered the responsibility of both mother and father to raise her. Marriage proposals came from many Sages' daughters for Maharshi Kurtuk, but he dedicated his life to raising his beloved daughter. He remembered that as a child, she had been very interested in dressing like men, learning weapons and horsemanship. She had no interest in dressing like girls or mastering household chores like other girls of her age. Because of her behaviour, she was often the subject of ridicule from the Sages' daughters and wives. But her father always supported her. As the head of the Ashram and Guru, when he announced his decision to the Ashram residents that he considered Kurtaki not as his daughter but as his son and initiated disciple, no one could speak to him directly, but he faced criticism in private. Ignoring these criticisms, his father passed on all his Vedic, weaponry, and Ayurvedic knowledge acquired by him from his Gurus Maharishi Vashistha and Maharishi Valmiki to his daughter. Seeing her keen interest in researching and inventing new weapons, he even built

a weapon laboratory for her. Not only in the Kurtuk Ashram, but across the world, everyone bowed their heads before Kurtaki's talent.

These words from his daughter brought back fond memories of his father Maharishi Kurtuk. Overwhelmed with old memories, the Maharishi said, 'Of course, daughter. This happened at the time when I was a Brahmachari Kurtuk, a disciple of Maharishi Vashisth in his Ashram. Maharishi Vashisth was not only the Chancellor of the Ashram and Gurukul or the family Guru of Emperor Sudas, he was also the head and Guru of the entire Aryan clan. At that time, a war was raging between two Aryan clans, the Tritsu and the Bharat. Ugra, the wife of Bharat Vishvaratha (who later became famous as Vishwamitra), was murdered by the Aryans.'

"Ugra! Who was she, father?" Kurtuki asked, curiously.

Maharishi Kurtuk said, 'Ugra was the daughter of the Dasyu King Shambar. The Dasyus were non-Aryans, so Ugra was a non-Aryan princess. The Aryan Vishvarath and Ugra fell in love. Vishvarath wanted to marry Ugra but the Aryan Guru Maharishi Vashishtha did not grant permission. Therefore, they married according to Dasyu tradition and began living as husband and wife in the palace of Shambar, the Dasyu King. The Aryans did not approve of this. Therefore, they organized and attacked the Dasyu King. They kidnapped all his sons and captured his 99 forts. The Aryan commanders wanted to kill both Ugra and Vishwarath, but Ugra with her valor, saved herself and Vishwarath from being sacrificed. A fierce battle ensued. Ultimately, the Aryans were victorious and the Dasyu King was forced to enter into a treaty with the Aryans. The Aryans told the Dasyu king that he would not give shelter to Ugra and Vishvarath in his palace. To save his face, Ugra's father Shambar blamed the war on his daughter Ugra calling her a traitor and abandoned her. This pact forced Ugra and Vishvarath to leave the Dasyuraj's palace and settle elsewhere.

Vishvarath took his wife Ugra and set off for the Ashram of his Guru Maharishi Agastya. He believed that there he would find a solution to

Ugra's acceptance as his wife by the Aryans. Maharishi Agastya smitten by the beauty of a non-Brahmin princess Lopamudra married her. Lopamudra was a Kshatriya princess, daughter of the Southern Panya king Malayadhvaj. The Aryans strongly opposed this marriage between Agastya, a Brahmin and Lopamudra, a Kshatriya. Even Maharishi Vashishtha, the Guru of the Aryans, was deeply saddened by his elder brother's actions. He even went far to say that the Gods were certainly hostile to the Aryan clan and they encouraged Lopamudra's marriage to Aryan Guru Maharishi Agastya. This was a plot to corrupt Aryan lineage. However, he was helpless before his brother. The love and marriage between Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra had challenged the practice of marriage in the Aryan clan. Maharishi Agastya then also decided to renounce his position as the family Guru of the Tritsu clan. This thought also deeply worried Maharishi Vashishtha. Maharishi Agastya was the only Guru of the Aryan clan who had never condemned Vishvarath's marriage to Ugra as inappropriate. Therefore, Vishvarath had full hope that he would receive justice there.

Even after taking refuge in Maharishi Agastya's Ashram, the Aryans continued to put pressure on Vishvarath to either abandon the non-Aryan Ugra or make her his slave. Vishvarath was not ready to accept this. One evening as the Sun had set and it was beginning to darken, Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra were conversing in the courtyard of their hermitage hut. At that time, they felt a shadow emerging from a nearby bush and approaching them. The shadow attacked Lopamudra with a gleaming sharp knife intent to kill her. Lopamudra screamed and pushed the shadow away with all her might. Then, she heard the shadow's hoarse voice and recognized him.

'O, this is Bhairava! The commander of the Aryan army!' Lopamudra cried out. Maharishi Agastya tried to catch the shadow and attack it with a weapon which he was carrying. Hearing the clash, Vishvaratha also emerged from his room. He tried to grab Bhairava from behind. Bhairava pushed Vishvaratha away and attacked Maharishi Agastya with a knife attempting to kill him. At that very moment, the anguished cry of Rohini, Maharishi Agastya's daughter, was heard from inside, 'Father, father, Ugra has been murdered.'

Laughing loudly, Bhairava then shouted, 'Yes, I have murdered Ugra. Now I will surely kill Maharishi Agastya, Vishvaratha, and Lopamudra.'

Before he could strike, Vishvaratha threw him to the ground and stabbed him to death. Both Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra were shocked by this sudden attack. Both were injured. The Ashram's physician was immediately summoned and they were transferred to the Ashram Ayurved hospital. Vishvarath then rushed to his room where Ugra's dead body was laying. Vishvarath approached the Aryan Acharya Pratardana carrying Ugra's body and requested him to summon the God of fire and offer Ugra's dead body to Him. It was an Aryan custom which continued to this day that dead bodies are offered to the God of fire for its purification. However, the Aryan Acharya Pratardana was unwilling to perform this Aryan ritual for a non-Aryan girl. The Aryan Acharya Pratardana said, 'O mighty Aryan Vishvarath, you are ordering me to offer the dead body of the non-Aryan Ugra to fire God to secure her a place in heaven. This is completely inappropriate and unacceptable to the Aryans. Please give permission to bury the dead body of Ugra in the earth as per the religious rites of the non-Aryans.

Though Vishwratha was sad to hear this comment from Aryan Acharya, but did allow dead body of Ugra to be buried in the earth. He, however, vowed that one day he would attain the level of Brahmin and would make this practice available not only to the Aryan clans but to all tribes of non-Aryans. This incident added fuel to the fire of deteriorating relations between the Tritsu and Bharat clans. To quench this fire and hearing the news of his elder brother Maharishi Agastya's injury, Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha immediately decided to go to Maharishi Agastya's Ashram in the South. There was no fixed time for his return from there, so to ensure that my education would not remain incomplete, he decided to send me to Maharishi Valmiki's Ashram. He wrote a letter to Maharishi Valmiki and ordered me to depart for Maharishi Valmiki's Ashram. Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha departed the next day to his brother Maharishi Agastya's Ashram in the South. I also set out on foot towards Maharishi Valmiki's Ashram. The route was difficult. As evening approached, I would spend the night in a temple in a remote village trying to sustain myself by eating whatever alms I could find there. The lack of nutritious food and the

exhaustion of the journey gradually weakened my body. Somehow, I reached Maharishi Valmiki's Ashram. My clothes were torn, my body was a mere skeleton and I no longer had the strength to take even a single step. I was just about to faint when I saw a youngman approaching me. The youngman steadied me and somehow took me to his hut in the Ashram. He fed me fruits and asked me lovingly, 'You look like a celibate from your attire. O youngman, who are you and why have you come to Maharishi Valmiki's Ashram?'

I then told him my name, the purpose of my visit, and a letter from Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha addressed to Maharishi Valmiki. Hearing Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha's name and knowing that I had come from his Ashram, he took my hand in his hand, kissed it and said, 'I am very fortunate to have met Maharishi Vashishtha's disciple.'

With such humility, this youngman introduced himself. He was none other than Brahmachari Bharadwaj. Offering me some new clothes from his own, he politely requested me to take a bath in river nearby. Taking the letter, he went to Maharishi Valmiki's hut. After bathing, I went back to his hut where Brahmachari Bhardwaj offered me food. After a full meal in weeks, I fell asleep. I do not know how much I slept, but it must have been the second day, when I woke up. I saw that same youngman, Brahmachari Bharadwaj sitting on another mat near me. He greeted me and said, 'Friend, take a bath and then let us go to meet Maharishi Valmiki.'

Thus, I was introduced to Brahmachari Bharadwaj.

After bathing and eating some fruits, Brahmachari Bharadwaj took me to Maharishi Valmiki's hut to meet him. Every part of my body was filled with joy. I was thinking that by the grace of Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha, I would have the darshan of that great poet soon, whose darshan was as rare as that of God himself. The first Sanskrit verse written by him started echoing in my ears.

**मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वंगमः शाश्वतीः समाः |**

**यत्क्रौंचमिथुनादेकं वधीः काममोहितम् ||**

**Maa Nishaad Pratishtam Tvangamah Shashvatih Samaah |  
Yatkraunchamithunadekam      Vadhih      Kammohitam ||**

*'O wicked one, you have killed a love-struck crane. You will never achieve glory and will have to endure separation.'*

As I entered the hut, I saw a statue of an ascetic with a strange radiance on his face. He welcomed me with a smile, saying, 'Come, son.'

I immediately prostrated before this divinely embodied sage.

'I know my son, you must have faced many difficulties on the way travelling to this Ashram. Take a few days of complete rest. Bharadwaj will make all the arrangements for your stay at the Ashram. How is my brother Vashishtha?' Tell me his welfare', Maharishi Valmiki said in a humble and polite voice.

Then, I told Maharishi Valmiki in detail how the Aryan commander Bhairava attacked Maharishi Agastya, Lopamudra and prince Vishvaratha in Maharshi Agastya's Ashram with the intention of killing them? How was he successful in killing Vishvaratha's wife Ugra? I also told that Maharishi Vashisth had traveled South to visit his injured elder brother Maharshi Agastya and to attempt to broker a truce between the two Aryan clans. Upon hearing this news, a look of worry appeared on Maharishi Valmiki's face. He quietly left his hut and went to the bank of the Ganges River. He was seen praying Mother Ganges.

Maharishi Valmiki himself belonged to the Nishada clan. After receiving enlightenment from sage Narada, he parried Lord Vishnu for several years. The Lord, pleased with his intense penance, granted him the knowledge of Brahman. Once, while on a tour of Aryavrata, he was the guest of the Dasyuraj Shambak. The Dasyuraj invited him to become the family Guru of the Dasyuraj clan and placing his daughter Ugra at his feet begged him to bless her. He certainly refused Dasyuraj's request to accept becoming Guru of his clan, but impressed by Ugra's personality he loved her like his own daughter. The news of her murder did distraught him and he was praying for her soul's peace on the banks of the Ganges.

At the request of Brahmachari Bharadwaj, I took up residence in his hut and this is how our friendship began. I attained Brahma-knowledge with Brahmachari Bharadwaj in Maharishi Valmiki's Ashram. Upon completion of my studies, Bharadwaj himself dropped me off in his chariot at Maharishi Vashisth's Ashram. Maharishi Vashisth had still not returned from his Southern journey. After staying at Maharishi Vashishtha's Ashram for few days, Bharadwaj returned to the capital of his adoptive father Emperor Bharata, while I waited there for Gurudev's return. Finally, a few months later, Gurudev arrived at his Ashram from the South. He was overjoyed to see the completion of my education and bestowed upon me the title of 'Maharishi', and granted me the permission to establish my own independent Ashram in Ladakh among my clan. I then departed for Ladakh with his blessings. The journey was a long one and Maharishi Vashishtha had made all the travel arrangements. At Maharishi's request, the emperor sent me off with a troop of ten armed soldiers ensuring complete travel comfort and knowing that I would need funds to establish my new Ashram, he gave me enough money. After coming to Ladakh, as you know, I established my new Ashram in Kurtuk, Ladakh.

Time was passing fast. I heard that while touring Aryavrata, Bharadwaj had freed Mount Govardhan from the curse of Maharishi Pulastya and had subsequently gone to the Himalayan caves to perform penance. There, he pleased Lord Vishnu and received the boon he desired through intense austerities. Also, he fell in love with the Apsara Ghritachi, a disciple of Mother Ganga and entered into a Gandharva marriage with her. This marriage resulted in the birth of a son named Drona. Then, I heard that Ghritachi had left him for heaven and he had returned to Kashi with his son. He worshipped Mahadev there and with his permission established a Gurukul in Prayagraj. Mahadev himself bestowed upon him the title of 'Maharishi'. At this very moment, I received a message from Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul in Prayag, in which he requested me to come to Prayag immediately. The Guru Bhai's request was command to me so, I immediately set off for Prayag. I was amazed at how Maharishi Bharadwaj had established the world-famous Gurukul in such a short time seeing the Prayag Gurukul. Hearing the news of my arrival, Maharshi Bharadwaj immediately ran towards me and welcomed me with great love and

respect. I was extremely curious to know why Maharishi had called me from such a faraway place? What could be the task that Maharishi might need my help in completing? This curiosity did not take long to last. I was very tired that day due to the long journey so, Maharishi Bhardwaj requested that I should bath in the Ganges River and after having lunch with him, should rest in the guest room. They would discuss the matter the next day. The next day, after waking up at Braham muhurta, bathing in the Ganges River and meditating, I returned to the Ashram. Maharishi Bhardwaj was waiting for me for breakfast. After a snack, he took me to his room and said, 'Maharishi Kurtuk Ji, I am faced with a serious dilemma. Only you can resolve it. You know that Emperor Bharat adopted me as his son. My adopted family has proposed my marriage to princess Sushila and I am under immense pressure. I am Brahmin, and princess Sushila is a Kshatriya. I believe this marriage will never be acceptable to Maharishi Vashishtha, the best of the Aryan Gurus. I will not marry without his approval. The royal family is stating that since I am the adopted son of Emperor Bharat, I am a Kshatriya and marrying a Kshatriya girl is not against Aryan law. However, I am the son of Devaguru Brihaspati and through my austerities as a Brahmin, have earned the blessings of Lord Vishnu and Mahadev. So, how can I agree to marry a Kshatriya princess Sushila? I personally have no objection to this marriage. I know princess Sushila very well. She is a very well-behaved and cultured girl who possesses complete knowledge of the Vedas as well as the art of weaponry. In my opinion, she would certainly be a suitable wife for me but Maharishi Vashishtha's permission is necessary and only you can obtain his permission. I humbly request you that after the fatigue of the journey is over, you please proceed to Maharishi Vashishtha's Ashram and seek his permission for this marriage.

I thought to myself that this could prove to be a very difficult task. My Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha was deeply saddened by the marriage of his own brother Maharishi Agastya to Kshatriya princess Lopamudra. That was a very difficult time. After this marriage, a terrible fire destroyed the entire Tritsugram (the capital of Emperor Tritsu and the Ashram of Maharishi Vashishtha at that time). Gurudev believed that this might be the protest of Agni Dev against this marriage.

He believed that this was a ploy by the non-Aryans to pollute the Aryan lineage and his brother Maharishi Agastya had fallen prey to princess Lopamudra's seduction. Would he consent to Maharishi Bharadwaj's marriage to princess Sushila? It was certainly a difficult question but at Guru Bhai's request, I had to try. So, I departed to Tritsugrama the next day. Arriving at Gurudev's Ashram, I went straight to his hut and prostrated myself before him. Gurudev was delighted to see me and embraced me. Gurudev said, 'You never even thought of me Kurtuk, and now you have come to see me at Bharadwaj's request. I know about princess Sushila's marriage proposal to Bharadwaj. The royal family informed me of this and asked for my permission. After much consideration, I am not opposed to this marriage. I personally taught princess Sushila. She is like my daughter. How could Bharadwaj possibly think I would wish harm to my daughter? Go and rest now in Atithishala, and on your way back to Prayag tell Bharadwaj that I will personally officiate this wedding.'

Gurudev's omniscient knowledge of all happenings was not surprising to me, but I could not believe that I would get permission so quickly. After spending a few days at Gurudev's Ashram and receiving his blessings, I departed to Prayag. Upon reaching Prayag, I shared the good news with Maharishi Bharadwaj. Gurubhai embraced me and expressing his profound gratitude said, 'Maharishi Kurtuk, only you could have accomplished this difficult task. I knew that if you approached Maharishi Vashisth with this request, he would surely grant his permission. Now, under the guidance of Maharishi Vashisth, please officiate the religious ceremonies of this marriage as my priest and depart to your Ashram only after the wedding. Maharishi Bharadwaj sent a message to the royal family agreeing to the marriage and also sent a message to Gurudev Maharishi Vashisth requesting him to select an auspicious time for the wedding. The marriage ceremony took place at the auspicious time chosen by Gurudev Maharishi Vashisth and shortly thereafter, I returned to Kurtuk with the blessings of Gurudev Maharishi Vashisth and Maharishi Bhardwaj. Thus, reviving old memories and singing other mythological tales, Maharishi Kurtuk's entourage arrived at Maharishi Bhardwaj's Ashram in Prayag. It was dusk. From a distance, he perceived a great light in the Gurukul and the Ganges River. Maharishi Kurtuk's heart was filled with joy. Surely my

friend had received information about my arrival and was preparing to welcome me and my group.

## Kurtuki's Stay in Prayag

When Maharishi Bharadwaj bathed in the Ganges during the Brahmamuhurta (divine time) that day and sat in meditation, he sensed the arrival of his friend Gurubhai Maharishi Kurtuk. He had already received news of Emperor Sudas's victory in the Dasharagya war under the guidance of Maharishi Vashisth. He was confident that Maharishi Kurtuk would definitely come to Prayag to meet him and so, he was waiting for him. Following this vision in his meditative state, he instructed his disciples to begin preparations to welcome Maharishi Kurtuk and his accompanying group. The entire Gurukul was decorated with flowers and garlands of lamps. Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul in Prayag looked like heaven on this day. At dusk, when hundreds of lamps lit up at the Gurukul and the Ganga Ghats, it seemed as if a group of Gods had descended on earth. This supernatural and wondrous sight was a sight to behold. As soon as the disciples received the news that Maharishi Kurtuk's group was just a short distance away, the atmosphere at the Ganga Ghats was filled with devotion, with Vedic mantras and hymns echoing alongside the Ganga Aarti accompanied by the sound of conch shells and bells. The glow of countless lamps burning simultaneously made it seem as if a river of lamps was flowing. Amid this extraordinary festival of lights, it was difficult to discern whether Mother Ganga was welcoming the Gods with garlands of lamps or whether the Gods were eager to express their gratitude to Tripurari Shankar and Ganga with garlands of lamps. As soon as they reached the Gurukul, Maharishi Kurtuk sent a letter with greetings to Maharishi Bharadwaj through the head of the army seeking permission to enter the Ashram as a matter of courtesy. The head of the army prostrated before Maharishi Bharadwaj upon reaching the Ashram and handed him the letter. As soon as Maharshi Bhardwaj received the letter, he started running towrds the gatge of the Ashram to greet his friend Maharishi Kurtuk. However, upon the army chief's request that Maharishi Bharadwaj shuld not give trouble to himself and wait at the gate of the Ashram, he consented. Maharishi Bharadwaj waited for his friend at the gate of the Ashram. Maharishi Kurtuk alighted from his chariot just before the gate of Prayag Gurukul and ran on foot to meet Maharishi Bharadwaj with his daughter Kurtaki. This meeting scene was a sight to behold.

Maharishi Bharadwaj garlanded Maharishi Kurtuk and embraced him lovingly. Maharishi Kurtuk then introduced his daughter Kurtaki to Maharishi Bharadwaj. Kurtaki immediately prostrated herself before Maharishi Bharadwaj. Maharishi Bharadwaj was overwhelmed and said, 'Daughter, I have heard a lot about your valor in the Dasharagya war. Seeing you today here, my eyes are never satisfied. Blessed are you, and blessed are your parents who gave birth to you.'

Just then, the Sage's wife Sushila, also came running. Maharishi Kurtuk bowed to her and placed his daughter Kurtaki at her feet. Tears welled up in the Sage's wife, Gurumaa Sushila. She embraced Kurtaki and gave motherly love to her. Gurumaa Sushila then took Kurtaki inside her hut and Maharishi Bharadwaj and Maharishi Kurtuk entered the Gurukul's special guest room. After making proper arrangements for his stay, Maharishi Bharadwaj then requested him to rest. Gurumaa Sushila arranged for Kurtaki's stay in her own hut.

Three days had passed since Maharishi Kurtuki had been staying at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram. They did not realize how the three days had passed. The conversations seemed endless. Maharishi Bharadwaj and his wife Gurumaa Sushila were never tired of hearing Kurtuki's account of the plan for the Dasharagya war and how they had achieved victory. Kurtuki visited every department of the Gurukul during these three days and felt immense joy meeting the disciples. She was deeply impressed by the Gurukul's mechanical engineering department. Appreciating Maharishi Bharadwaj and his disciples' research into new weapons, her curiosity grew. She decided to request her father to grant her the opportunity to spend some time at the Gurukul and if possible, to become a disciple of Gurudev Maharishi Bharadwaj and learn from him. Then, Lord Parashurama arrived on the fourth day.

## **The Arrival of Lord Parashurama**

Both Sages were astonished by the sudden and unannounced arrival of Lord Parashurama. They immediately prostrated themselves before Him. After receiving Lord Parashurama's blessings, they placed Him on a high pedestal. A woman and a child were accompanying Him. Maharishi Bharadwaj was trying to identify the woman. He then remembered that she was Shashiyasi, the daughter of Emperor Sudas. The non-Aryan emperor Bheda had abducted her and forced her to become his wife. Why was she here with Lord Parashurama? Maharishi Bharadwaj was lost in these thoughts when he heard the words of Lord Parashurama.

Lord Parashurama said, "Bharadwaj, you know that by abducting Shashiyasi, Bheda committed a most wicked act which led to the extreme enmity between the Trishus and the Dasyus. Under the protection of Vashisth and the military leadership of Kurtuka, Sudas killed Bheda in the battle of Dasaragya. Avenging his insult, Sudas freed Shashiyasi from the Dasyus. Unfortunately, as you knew that the sinful Bheda forcibly married an Aryan princess, desecrating the chaste maiden and thus committed a heinous act. This inauspicious marriage also resulted in the birth of a son. It is the desire of both Vashisth and me that you purify these two, mother and son, and induct them into the Aryan clan. Then, I will place Shashiyasi's son on the Dasyu throne and declare the Dasyu kingdom a part of the Aryan kingdom. As per the orders of Vashisth the Aryan guru, it is now necessary to purify them according to Aryan customs and he has instructed you to carry out this ritual appropriately. Therefore, I have brought this girl and child to you.

A very beautiful princess Shashiyasi was the daughter of King Sudas of Tritsu. The non-Aryan king Bheda was captivated by her beauty and desired to marry her. However, he knew that Emperor Sudas was an Aryan and he was a non-Aryan. This marriage would be unacceptable to the Aryans. Therefore, he devised a plan to kidnap the princess and force her into marriage. Through his spies he learned of the princess's daily routine. At a certain time each day, when princess Shashiyasi would bathe with her friends on the royal banks of the Yamuna River in Tritsugram, the

number of guards deployed for her was no more than ten or fifteen. This was the opportune moment for the non-Aryan king Bheda to abduct her. One day, at this very time, he attacked these guards to abduct the princess. Emperor Sudas's security forces were far outnumbered by the attacking forces. They were taken aback by this unexpected attack and risking their lives fought the non-Aryans with all their might, but ultimately died a heroic death. Bheda succeeded in abducting princess Shashiyasi. Forcibly placing her in his chariot, he rode his horses at full speed towards his capital. By the time Emperor Sudas learned of this, he was far away from Tritsugrama. Emperor Sudas was enraged by the audacity of king Bheda and planned to attack him to kvenge his actions. However, his spies informed him that the king Bheda had formed alliances with other rulers, Emperor Alin of Nuri, Emperor Anu of Parushni, Emperor Bhalan of Bolan Darra, Emperor Druhyu of Gandhara and Emperor Matsya of Shalva. Their combined forces were ready to face Emperor Sudas. Furthermore, Vishvaratha, a descendant of Bharata was hostile to Emperor Sudas and would not support him. Emperor Sudas's military force was far inferior to this combined force. Had Emperor Sudas attacked, defeat was certain.

In this situation, Emperor Sudas had to swallow this humiliation and waited for the right moment to take revenge. He found this opportunity during the Dashrayna war and took his revenge by killing Bheda. Dasyuraj Bheda abducted princess Shashiyasi and forcibly married her through Gandharva marriage giving birth to a son, Sucharit. Lord Parashurama took prince Sucharita and Empress Shashiyasi to the Ashram of Maharishi Bharadwaj to purify them and induct them into the Aryan clan. He planned to declare that the Dasyu kingdom would be the part of the Aryan kingdom and planned to install Sucharit on the throne. As ordered by Lord Parashurama and Maharishi Vashisth, the purification process of Prince Sucharit and Empress Shashiyasi began the next day at Brahmanuhurta. The two great Sages, Maharishi Bharadwaj and Maharishi Kurtuk personally led the process. First of all, they were made to take bath in Mother Ganga with chanting of mantras.

**गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वती |  
नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरी जलेऽस्मिन्सन्निधिं कुरु ॥**

**Gange Cha Yamune Chaiv Godavari Saraswati |  
Narmade Sindhu Cauvery Jaleasminsamidhi Kuru ||**

After this, these two, mother and son, were purified by chanting mantras on the sacrificial altar and offering sacrificial offerings to Agnideva

**ॐ अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा |  
यः स्मरेत् पुण्डरीकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यन्तर शुचिः ||  
यानि कानि पापानि जन्मान्तरकृतानि च |  
तानि तानि प्रणश्चन्ति प्रदक्षिणा पदे-पदे ||  
मंत्र हीनं क्रियाहीनं भक्तिहीनं जनार्दन |  
यत्पूजितं मया देव परिपूर्णं तदस्तु मे ||**

**Om Apavitrah Pavitro Vaa Sarvaavastham Gatoapi Vaa.  
Yah Smaret Pundarikaksham Sa Vahyabhyantar Shuchih.  
Yaani Kaani Paapaani Janmaantarakrutaani cha.  
Taani Taani Pranaschanti Pradakshina Pade-Pade.  
Mantra Hinam Kriyaahinam Bhaktihinam Janaardan.  
Yatpujitam Mayaa Dev Paripurnam Tadastu me.**

Upon completion of the purification process, son Sucharit and Empress Shashiyasi were declared Aryans and their oath-taking ceremony to follow the rules of the Aryans was held. Lord Parashurama prepared to take them to the Dasyu capital after their purification ceremony, where he would enthrone Prince Sucharit as Emperor and appoint mother Shashiyasi as his guardian until the child prince Sucharit reached adulthood. After completing this task, he had another crucial task, killing of Sahastrarjuna.

Lord Parashurama looked at Maharishi Kurtuk and requested him to accompany him in both these tasks. Lord Parashurama's request was his command so, Maharishi Kurtuk immediately agreed to accompany him. Kurtaki also wanted to accompany them but Lord Parashurama gestured to her not to and entrusting her responsibility to Maharishi Bharadwaj.

‘Bhardwaj, we hope to complete both these tasks soon and return. Until then, daughter Kurtaki will remain here under your protection. Send away Emperor Sudas's soldiers who accompanied Maharishi Kurtuk. After our return, we will make the proper arrangements to send Kurtuk and Kurtaki to their Ashram in Ladakh,’ Lord Parashurama commanded Maharishi Bharadwaj.

## Killing of Sahastrarjuna

After the purification ceremony and initiation of Empress Shashiyasi and her son Sucharit into the Aryan lineage, Lord Parashurama and Maharishi Kurtuk departed from Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram to arrive at Maharishi Agastya's Ashram in South. Their objective here was to receive the blessings of Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra, install Sucharit on the Dasyu throne and to obtain their permission to induct every man and woman from the Dasyu community into the Aryan lineage. Lord Parashurama knew that Lopamudra had been striving for many years to teach and enforce the Aryan system among the Dasys. Lopamudra's influence and respect within the Dasyu community would facilitate His two tasks, declaring Sucharit the Dasyu Emperor and initiating the Dasyu community into the Aryan lineage. As soon as Lord Parashurama and Maharishi Kurtuk reached Maharishi Agastya's Ashram with Empress Shashiyasi and her son Sucharit, Maharishi Agastya was immediately informed about their arrival. Hearing about the arrival of Lord Parashurama, Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra ran barefoot towards the Ashram gate to greet Him. Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra prostrated before Lord Parashurama. Then, Maharishi Kurtuk and Empress Shashiyasi also prostrated before Maharishi Agastya. Empress Shashiyasi placed her son at his feet. After the exchange of greetings, Maharishi Agastya took all the guests to his hut. He offered fruits to them.

Then, Lord Parashurama informed them about His plan. Lord Parashurama said, 'O Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra, as per the orders of Maharishi Vashishtha, the family Guru of the Aryans, Empress Shashiyasi and prince Sucharit have been purified and inducted into the Aryan dynasty. Now, with your permission, prince Sucharit is to be anointed to the Dasyu throne and queen mother Empress Shashiyasi is to be made his guardian until he reaches adulthood. The Dasyu kingdom is to be annexed into Aryavarta. I will need help from Lopamudra to install Sucharit as the emperor of Dasyu kingdom and purify Dasyu clan to induct into Aryan clan. Please give your permission and blessings for the success of this task.'

The entire atmosphere echoed with the words "Thank you, thank you" from Maharishi Agastya and Lopamudra. Lopamudra stepped forward and, bowing her head once again at Lord Parashurama's feet, began to plead, 'O Lord, sure, I will follow Your orders. I too desire to accompany You to the Dasyu capital and anoint prince Sucharita with my own hands.'

Hearing Lopamudra's humble words, Lord Parashurama said, 'Let us not delay Lopamudra. Seek Maharishi Agastya's blessings and permission and immediately prepare to depart with us.'

Receiving Maharishi Agastya's blessings and permission, Lord Parashurama set off with his entourage to the Dasyu Rajdhani. Upon reaching the capital, the entire city thronged to witness Lord Parashurama, Maharishi Kurtuk, mother Lopamudra, queen mother Shashiyasi and prince Sucharita. The military officers somehow controlled the people. The entire group, accompanied by Lord Parashurama then, arrived at the palace.

Upon arriving at the palace, Lord Parashurama announced to the chief minister that prince Sucharita would be enthroned soon and ordered him to immediately make appropriate arrangements for the ceremony. Lord Parashurama's command was immediately obeyed. The next day, at an auspicious time after seating Lord Parashurama and Maharishi Kurtuk on a high seat and worshipping them, mother Lopamudra herself conducted the coronation ceremony. Prince Sucharita was happily seated on a beautiful golden throne facing east. Queen mother Shashiyasi was seated on an auspicious throne made of ivory and adorned with gold. All the ministers, including the chief minister were seated on separate thrones. After seating prince Sucharita on the throne, mother Lopamudra, in accordance with the Aryan Vedic tradition, touched him with a white flower, a swastika, unbroken rice grains, earth, gold, silver and a gem. After this, all the dignitaries including the chief minister, the commander-in-chief and other dignitaries led the priest and offered many auspicious items to Emperor Sucharita. Then, at the behest of mother Lopamudra, the royal priest lit a fire on the altar and offered oblations according to the prescribed rituals and mantras.

ॐ स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः | स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ||  
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः | स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ||  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ||

**Om Svasti Na Indro Vrdhashravah.  
Svasti Na Poosha Visvavedah.  
Svasti Nastarkshya Arishtanemi.  
Svasti No Brihaspatirdhaatu.  
Om Shantih Shanthi Shantih.**

Lord Parashurama, Maharishi Kurtuk, and mother Lopamudra then rose and worshipped the altar. Lord Parashurama, holding a conch shell, anointed Emperor Sucharit with its sacred water. Following the conch shell anointing ceremony, all dignitaries performed the ceremony as ordered by Lord Parashurama. Queen mother Shashiyasi then bowed first to Lord Parashurama then to Maharishi Kurtuk and mother Lopamudra expressing her gratitude on behalf of Emperor Sucharit as per the religious rituals. Thus, Emperor Sucharit's coronation was completed. Lord Parashurama then rose from His seat and addressed everyone saying, 'O Emperor Sucharit, queen mother Shashiyasi, Maharishi Kurtuk, mother Lopamudra, chief minister, ministers, commanders and all the subjects of the Dasyu kingdom, until Emperor Sucharita reaches adulthood queen mother Shashiyasi will be his guardian and take charge of the kingdom. I hope that the queen mother will receive full support from all of you, the chief ministers, ministers, commanders, and the people of the kingdom. Emperor Sucharit and queen mother Shashiyasi have been inducted into the Aryan dynasty and therefore, this kingdom is now a part of Aryavarta. Through Lopamudra, I invite all of you men and women of this kingdom to be inducted into the Aryan dynasty. Lopamudra will make complete appropriate arrangements for this purification process. If anyone has any objections, please present your views to me immediately.'

As soon as Lord Parashurama finished his address, the chief minister, ministers, commanders, and all the officials present in the ceremony

respectfully stood up from their seats and bowed their heads at the feet of Lord Parashurama.

Then, on behalf of all the chief minister said, 'O Lord, we are blessed that today, our impure land has been sanctified by your lotus feet. Your orders will be followed to the letter. I, along with all my ministers, commanders, and army, surrender to Emperor Sucharit and queen mother Shashiyasi. The people welcome your decision to join the Aryan dynasty and we pledge that from this day forward; we will fully follow the traditions of the Aryan dynasty.'

Having thus annexed the Dasyu kingdom to Aryavarta and having obtained a pledge of allegiance to the Emperor Sucharit and queen mother from all officials, and having ordered other Lopamudra to remain there for a few days to manage the affairs, Lord Parashurama and Maharishi Kurtuk departed to fulfill their second objective, to kill Sahastrarjuna.

Emperor Sahastrarjuna of Mahishmati kingdom in modern days Madhya Pradesh was a very cruel ruler. Sahastrarjuna was the son of Emperor Kartavirya of the Haihaya dynasty of Kshatriyas and Empress Kaushik. His birth name was Arjuna but he performed severe penance to please Lord Dattatreya. Pleased with his penance, Lord Dattatreya asked him to ask for a boon. Arjuna then asked Lord Dattatreya for a thousand weapons so that he would remain undefeated in any battle. Receiving this boon from Lord Dattatreya, his name was changed from Arjuna to Sahastrarjuna. The mighty emperor Sahastrarjuna even captured Ravana, the king of Lanka.

Once, Ravana, the king of Lanka went to Mahishmati to meet Emperor Sahastrarjuna. At that time, Emperor Sahastrarjuna was enjoying water sports with his wives in the Narmada River. Seeing the sacred atmosphere on the banks of the Narmada River, Ravana began worshipping Lord Shiva. A short distance from the spot Ravana had chosen for his Lord Shiva worship, Emperor Sahastrarjuna was engrossed in water sports with his wives. With his thousand hands, Emperor Sahastrarjuna playfully stopped the flow of the Narmada River causing the Narmada's waters to rise above its banks. The Narmada bank where Ravana was worshipping Lord Shiva began to be submerged. Ravana sent his soldiers to

investigate the cause of this sudden flood. In the mean time, all of a sudden, Emperor Sahastrarjuna released the Narmada's water, sweeping away Ravana's entire army. Hurt by the death of his soldiers, Ravana challenged Emperor Sahastrarjuna for a fight. A fierce battle took place between Ravana and Emperor Sahastrarjuna on the banks of Narmada. Finally, Emperor Sahastrarjuna captured Ravana. When Maharishi Pulastya, the grandfather of Ravana came to know about this, he came to Emperor Sahastrarjuna and requested him to release his grandson from prison. Respecting the Maharishi, Emperor Sahastrarjuna even after defeating Ravana freed him and made friendship with him. After winning over Ravana, Emperor Sahastrarjuna filled with pride started crossing all the limits of humanity. The people started crying out in distress due to his atrocities and misdeeds. Dishonoring Brahmins, dishonoring religious scriptures, destroying the Ashrams of the Sages, killing Sages without reason, constantly torturing innocent subjects, destroying the chastity of helpless women for his own amusement, had become his daily routine.

Once, Sahastrarjuna went hunting in the forests of Jaunpur. In this very forest was the Ashram of Maharishi Jamdagni, the father of Lord Parashurama. Distressed by hunger and thirst, Sahastrarjuna along with his soldiers went to the Sage's Ashram seeking water and food. Maharishi Jamdagni gave Sahastrarjuna and his soldiers a royal welcome and made complete arrangements for their food and lodging with the help of his cow Kamadhenu. Seeing the miracles of mother Kamadhenu, Sahastrarjuna was mesmerized and asked Maharishi Jamdagni to gift him the cow Kamadhenu. Maharishi Jamadagni refused to give him the cow Kamadhenu. Then, he forcibly abducted her and proceeded towards his capital.

Lord Parashurama was not in the Ashram at that time. When Lord Parashurama returned to the Ashram, his father Maharishi Jamadagni told him the full story of how Sahastrarjuna arrived at the Ashram with his soldiers and how he had abducted the mother cow Kamdhenu and proceeded towards his capital. Enraged Lord Parashuram then proceeded rapidly towards Sahastrarjuna's capital Mahishmati, to kill him. When Sahastrarjuna heard that Lord Parashurama was pursuing him, knowing His power, he abandoned the cow Kamadhenu and hid in the forest.

Although Lord Parashurama returned to his father's Ashram with the mother cow Kamadhenu, His anger remained unquenched. He thought that it was necessary that this sinner be punished for his deeds and the only punishment for him was death. Lord Parashurama attempted to kill Sahastrarjuna several times but this cowardly man kept hiding out of fear. Meanwhile, his atrocities against religious Sages continued to escalate. This time Lord Parashurama resolved to return to his Ashram only after executing him. Sahastrarjuna had now fully realized that hiding from Lord Parashurama would not be possible for long. Therefore, he assembled a massive army of twenty thousand soldiers to fight with him. With the aim of achieving victory and killing Lord Parashurama, he began advancing towards Aryavarta. Lord Parashurama had just anointed Emperor Sucharita in the Dasyu capital and was about to set out with Maharishi Kurtuk to kill Sahastrarjuna when he received a message from Emperor Sudas that Sahastrarjuna was advancing towards Aryavarta with a massive army.

When Emperor Sudas received news from Tritsugrama that Sahastrarjuna was advancing towards Aryavarta with a large army and that his primary objective was to defeat and capture him, he immediately went to the Ashram of Maharishi Vashisth to discuss with his Gurudev. Maharishi Vashisth was aware of Sahastrarjuna's powers. Only Lord Parashurama possessed the ability to match Sahastrarjuna's powers and no one else. Maharishi Vashisth said to Emperor Sudas, 'There is no news of Lord Parashurama. I sent him to Maharishi Bharadwaj for the purification of Shashyasi and his son so that they could be installed in the Aryan clan and prince Sucharita could be installed on the Dasyu throne. I have received news that after the purification, he has departed for Dasyunagari. We must wait for his return. Until then, order the royal family and people to go underground and proceed to Kurukshetra with the army. I have sought the cooperation of several other Aryavarta kingdoms to collectively confront Sahastrarjuna and positive messages have been received from all kingdoms. The armies of all other Aryavarta kingdoms are now gathering in Kurukshetra. As soon as I receive news of Lord Parashurama, I will convey the message to Him to proceed to Kurukshetra. I will wait for Lord Parashurama here in the Ashram. Take all my Sanyasis with you as well and go underground.'

Emperor Sudas became worried about Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha. The fear that the evil Sahastrarjuna might do something unethical to Gurudev made Emperor Sudas's soul tremble. Standing before Gurudev with folded hands, he pleaded, "Gurudev, I order the entire royal family and subjects to go underground and I also order my army to proceed to Kurukshetra under the command of the commander-in-chief. But I ask for your permission to remain with you to protect you.'

Gurudev Vashishthaa looked at Emperor Sudas and patting his back affectionately smiled and said, 'Emperor, I am capable of protecting myself. You go and obey my orders.'

Emperor Sudas followed the orders of Maharishi Vashistha and left to Kurukshetra with his army.

When Sahastrarjuna entered Trisugrama with his vast army, he found the city empty. He ran towards the hermitage of Maharishi Vashishthaa in anger. There too, he found that the hermitage was empty. However, he saw Maharishi Vashishthaa sitting before the fire altar. Dismounting from his horse, he headed straight towards the Sage and sarcastically said, 'So, you are still here? Are you not afraid of me?'

Maharishi Vashishthaa continued to offer oblations to the Yajna while chanting mantras without looking at him. Sahastrarjuna became extremely angry at this inattention and shouted, 'Stop all this. Don't you know me?'

The Sage now turned to Sahastrarjuna and said in a humble voice, 'Son Arjuna, I have known you since you were born on this earth.'

Maharishi Vashistha was about to say something further when the arrogant Sahastrarjuna interrupted him with a loud laugh and insultingly said to him, 'O old man, I have not come to seek your advice but to destroy you. I will burn this Ashram soon to ashes.'

Then, Maharishi Vashistha said in humble words, "O Sahastrarjuna, this Ashram is a gift from God Himself. If you try to burn it to ashes, you yourself will be reduced to ashes.'

The enraged Sahastrarjuna then grabbed the Sage by his beard and tried to pull him away.

‘Enough Sahastrarjuna, now you have invited your own death. I have the ability to reduce you to ashes myself but your death is certain at the hands of Lord Parashurama. Therefore, without interrupting at the Lord's work I curse you to become powerless within the confines of this Ashram and to be killed soon by a Brahmin soon’, said Maharishi Vashisth.

Sahasrarjuna had not expected the Sage to curse him to become powerless in this manner. He tried to raise his sword to kill the Sage but it would not rise. With a saddened heart, he left the Ashram. When he had just left the Ashram, when one of his spies informed him of the gathering of Emperor Sudas and the armies of other Aryavarta kingdoms in Kurukshetra. The spies also informed him that Lord Parashurama had also left the Dasyu city to confront him accompanied by another Sage.

Sahastrarjuna immediately ordered his army to proceed towards Kurukshetra.

Lord Parashurama accompanied by Maharishi Kurtuk quickly reached Tritsugrama. They found the city empty. They understood that Sahastrarjuna had surely arrived with his army to attack. They immediately ran towards Maharishi Vashisth's Ashram. The Ashram was also empty but the aroma of sacrificial offerings emanating from a corner attracted Him. He saw Maharishi Vashisth alone chanting mantras and performing the Yagna. Sage Vashisth appeared to be slightly injured. He immediately rushed to Maharishi Vashisth and embraced him. He understood that only Sahastrarjuna could have committed this crime. Sahastrarjuna's audacity was so audacious that he insulted and injured Maharishi Vashista, the revered Gurudev of all Aryavarta, Lord Parashurama's blood boiled with anger.

After hearing the full story from Maharishi Vashisth, Lord Parashurama asked for permission to proceed to Kurukshetra and promised that this time he would surely execute Sahastrarjuna. When Lord Parashurama arrived at Kurukshetra with Maharishi Kurtuk, the armies of both sides

were standing ready for battle. He immediately reached at the middle of the two armies and addressed Sahastrarjuna, saying, 'O wicked Sahastrarjuna, you have animosity with me. Instead of killing innocent soldiers, fight a duel with me and strive for victory. If you succeed in defeating me, victory will be yours. And if I defeat you, victory will be for the kingdoms of Aryavarta. Order your commanders and soldiers not to fight, but see the duel.'

The arrogant Sahastrarjuna laughed loudly and said, 'O weak man, I have never killed you so far considering you a Brahmin. Now, if Yamaraj is so dear to you, then I certainly accept your proposal to fight a duel.'

Ordering the commander-in-chief of his army who was his son not to fight, the arrogant Sahastrarjuna descended from his chariot and prepared to fight a duel with Lord Parashurama. Meanwhile, Lord Parashurama also ordered Maharishi Kurtuk, Emperor Sudas and all the Aryavarta emperors to only watch the duel and not to fight. It was a very fierce battle. Both were experts in divine weapons and valiant warriors. In that battle, both Sahastrarjuna and Lord Parashurama abandoning their love for lives became furious and fought with full force. Sahastrarjuna released fierce weapons like a blazing meteor. That force permeated the entire Universe with its brilliance. Then Lord Parashurama seeing that radiant Shakti blazing like the Sun of the doomsday coming towards him, cut it into three pieces with his arrows and threw it to the ground. Then a gentle breeze filled with a sacred fragrance began to blow. When Lord Parshuram cut off the powerful weapon Shakti, Sahastrarjuna burned with anger released twelve more fearsome powerful divine weapons. They were so radiant and swift that it was impossible to describe their form. Seeing these powerful weapons blazing like the twelve Suns of the doomsday coming from all directions in many forms and blazing like fierce flames of fire, Lord Parashurama was momentarily overwhelmed. He then shattered them with his arrows. Sahastrarjuna then used twelve another divine arrows. Lord Parashurama rendered even those fearsome weapons as useless. Then, Lord Parashurama unleashed many other terrifying weapons that looked bizarre. They were studded with gold leaf and resembled huge, burning meteors. Sahastrarjuna intercepted those terrifying weapons. Sahastrarjuna, then, began showering more divine arrows on Lord

Parashurama. Lord Parashurama thwarted all of them. When Sahastrarjuna's barrage of arrows ceased, Lord Parashurama attacked Sahastrarjuna with His axe. The blows of the axe were unbearable for Sahastrarjuna and one by one his hands fell to the ground. Ultimately, death embraced him and thus ended the life of this wicked man. The news of Sahastrarjuna's martyrdom caused an uproar in his army. The army began to flee. But like father like son, Sahastrarjuna's commander-in-chief son disobeying his father's command not to fight, promised to avenge his father's death and suddenly attacked Maharishi Kurtuk and Emperor Sudas who were leading the army of Aryans. He first encountered Maharishi Kurtuk. Maharishi Kurtuk was unprepared for this sudden attack. The villain attacked him without warning like a coward and severely injured him. Seeing this, Lord Parashurama immediately ran towards Maharishi Kurtuk and challenged the enemy. The coward, seeing Lord Parashurama in front of him, immediately disappeared from there. Sahastrarjuna's army was now without its king and commander and fled from the battlefield. Only two people were harmed in this battle: Sahastrarjuna, who attained martyrdom and Maharishi Kurtuk who fell victim to the cowardly attack of his son. After thanking all the Aryavarta emperors and ordering them to return to their kingdoms with their armies, Lord Parashurama and Emperor Sudas immediately proceeded to Maharishi Vashisth's Ashram carrying the wounded Maharishi Kurtuk. Upon reaching Maharshi Vashisth's Ashram, they immediately began treating him. However, his wounds were extremely deep and life-threatening. Even after Maharshi Vashisth's thorough treatment, there was no improvement in his condition. Knowing that the day of his samadhi was near, Maharishi Vashisth immediately sent a message to Prayag for his daughter Kurtuki and Maharishi Bharadwaj to come and pay their last respects to Maharishi Kurtuki. Upon receiving the sad news, Kurtuki and Maharishi Bharadwaj along with his wife Sushila immediately arrived at Maharishi Vashisth's Ashram. Kurtuki's heart was filled with sorrow at the sight of her father's condition. Then, the father consoled her and placed her at the feet of the Sage Bhardwaj's wife Sushila. Addressing the Sage's wife Sushila Ji with respect, he requested her to raise his daughter like her own daughter. Then he left his mortal body.

Maharishi Vashishtha himself performed his last rites. Consoling her daughter Kurtaki, Lord Parashurama Himself conveyed the message of the Lord that her father now resides in Saket Dham in union with the Lord. He had attained salvation and would not take rebirth.

Kurtaki now had a mother in the form of the Sage Bhardwaj's wife, Sushila, and a father in the form of Maharishi Bharadwaj, her father's close friend and Gurubhai. Kurtaki arrived at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram in Prayag with her new family filled with grief. Placing her head on Sushila's shoulder, she said, 'Mother, my father has placed me at your feet. What do I have to do at Kurtuk Ashram now? I want to send a portion of the treasure given by Emperor Sudas to my Gurubhai Param and announce his appointment as the head of the Kurtuk Ashram. I want to remain here in Prayag serving you for the rest of my life. Please give me your permission.'

Mother Sushila embraced the adopted daughter and said, 'Daughter, as you may wish.'

Impressed by Kurtaki's knowledge of weapons, Maharishi Bharadwaj then appointed her as the Vice-Chancellor of the Gurukul and the Head of the Yantra Department. Thus, Kurtaki became an integral part of Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul.

## Kurtaki's Research

Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki had only been at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram for some time when one day Kubera Deva arrived in the Ashram. Maharishi Bharadwaj offered him a high seat and with utmost respect said, 'O Lord, I am blessed that you spared a few moments from your busy schedule for my Ashram. What service can I render you?'

Kubera Deva then requested Maharishi Bharadwaj to construct a chariot for his travels that could travel on land, water, and sky. If necessary, it could be rendered invisible for protection against enemies and be propelled by mantras. Responding to Kubera Deva's request and at Maharishi Bharadwaj's direction, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki took up this task and thus, Maharishi Bharadwaj's book "Yantra Sarvasya," was launched.

Maharishi Bharadwaj and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki began a discussion on the construction of this special chariot. The first consideration was what would be the name of this chariot capable of moving equally well on land, water, and sky. After some thought, Maharishi came up with the word "Vimana". Defining it, Maharishi said, 'V' meaning sky and 'Maan' meaning measuring, meaning a chariot capable of measuring the sky. Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki welcomed this name of the chariot with the words "Sadhu, Sadhu," and thus, this chariot was named 'Vimana'.

The next problem was which type of the fuel would be used to power this special aircraft that would be always available and never run out. Several types of fuels were considered such as solar energy, wind energy, magnetic energy, oil energy, etc. Oil energy would require a large tank that would need to be refilled repeatedly. Magnetic energy would require electricity which is not always possible. Solar energy can only be used during the day and was, therefore, not suitable. Both the Maharishi and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki decided that this aircraft should be air-powered.

The next topic of discussion was the selection of the construction material. The consideration was to select a metal that would completely absorb light to become invisible when required. The consensus was then on 'Tamo-

Garbha' iron metal. It has the ability to absorb up to 90 percent of light and render objects invisible. This metal is black in color, harder than glass and resistant to corrosion.

According to the wishes of Lord Kubera, various essential instruments were provided in this aircraft.

(1) **Vishwa Kriya Darpan Yantra:** To detect enemy movements around the aircraft.

(2) **Parivesh Kriya Yantra:** An automated aeronautical instrument using mantras to direct the aircraft in the sky, speed, and underground, etc.

(3) **Shabdakarshan Yantra:** To protect the aircraft from accidents by simply listening to sounds around the aircraft and also as birds chirping.

(4) **Guha Garbha Yantra:** An instrument to detect explosives under the earth.

(5) **Shaktikarshan Yantra:** A device to attract poisonous rays, convert them into heat and release them into the atmosphere.

(6) **Compass Yantra:** A device to show direction.

(7) **Vakra Prasaran Yantra:** A device to direct the aircraft to move in the opposite direction when the enemy suddenly appears.

(8) **Apasmar Yantra:** A device to direct the release of poisonous gas during war.

(9) **Tamo-Garbh Yantra:** A device to make the aircraft invisible.

Thus, the Pushpak Vimana was invented which was completely magical. It operated by Mantras. The Pushpak Vimana's speed was supersonic. It could neither be broken, burned nor cut. This aircraft also possessed the ability to sense the pilot's behavior. For example, if the pilot was mentally unstable or had committed an unforgivable sin, the Viman would not fly. A

story related to this incident occurred long after the aircraft's construction but serves as a vivid example of understanding the pilot's state of mind. After the construction and successful use of the Pushpak Vimana, it was handed over to Sri Kubera Deva. Kubera Deva was extremely pleased with Maharishi Bharadwaj and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki and granted them the boon of ownership of the inexhaustible treasure. Later, as history has it, Ravana, the king of Lanka won this aircraft from his brother Kubera Deva in battle and began using it for his own use. The incident occurred when Lord Ram after killing Ravana boarded the Pushpak Vimana along with his companions to depart for Ayodhya. Appropriate mantras were chanted to direct the Pushpak Vimana but the plane failed to take off. Then, Lord Ram sent Hanuman Ji to Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram in Prayagraj to learn the reason. Upon reaching the Prayag Ashram, Hanuman Ji prostrated before Maharishi Bharadwaj and narrated the entire incident. The Maharishi immediately told Hanuman Ji that Ram had killed Ravana, a Brahmin and therefore, he bore the sin of killing a Brahmin (Brahmhatya). The mechanism in the plane would prevent him from flying until he atoned for it. Upon returning to Lanka, Hanuman Ji told this to Lord Ram who realized His mistake and, after establishing a Shivalinga dedicated to Lord Shiva, prayed for atonement. This temple still exists in Sri Lanka. Mahadev appeared, freed him from the sin of Brahmahatya and then the Pushpak Vimana took off.

During Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki's stay in Prayag, a severe famine struck Northern India accompanied by a devastating infectious disease dysentery. Maharishi Bharadwaj and Kurtaki were moved by the region's plight. They thought that a solution must be found for the common good. They set out to find a solution. Maharishi Bharadwaj had studied Ayurveda from Lord Indra himself and the Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki's stay in the Himalayas had given her knowledge of all types of herbs. Therefore, they set out to develop a cure for this epidemic using Ayurveda. Together with Maharishi Bharadwaj's disciples Maharishi Divodas and Maharishi Dhanvantari, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki developed a cure for this epidemic using Ashtanga Ayurveda. Maharishi Bharadwaj subsequently authored the book 'Ayurveda Samhita', which details remedies for all types of diseases.

Discussing the causes of epidemics and famines, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki stated that such diseases and natural disasters were due to imbalances in Nature. She emphasized the need to pay attention to the environment to transform this imbalance into balance. The Vice-Chancellor conveyed that the natural environment was the sum total of all the forces, conditions, and objects that reflected on the human world and regulated its activities. It was essential that all biotic and abiotic components of the Earth remained in a state of balance. She further stated that only when the invisible sky, space, Earth and all its components, water, medicines, plants, all resources, and knowledge, were in a state of balance, individuals and the world could live in peace and balance. Whenever humans violate the laws of Nature, Nature transforms into the fierce form of Chandika. She tried to appease the mother earth with the Rigvedic mantra, 'माँ नो माता पृथ्वी दुरंतो धात' 'Maa No Maata Prithvi Duranto Dhaat'. (O Mother Earth, do not cast your wrathful gaze upon us; it is only when you are angry that we have to face natural calamities like famine, excessive rainfall, and drought)

She conducted several Yagnas to pacify mother earth. She gave the message, 'माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः' 'Maataa Bhumih Putro Aham Prithviyah'.

(The Earth is our mother, milk her tender milk and seek her blessings of love, affection, and kindness).

Quoting the mantras from the Vedas, she said, 'भूमिर्माता भ्राता अन्तरिक्षं द्या ना पिता एवं दशपुत्रसमो द्रुमः', 'Bhumirmaata Bhraata Antariksham Dya Naa Pita and Dashputrasamo Drumah'.

Earth is the mother, sky is the father and space is the brother. The glory of a tree is greater than that of ten sons.

Some time after this epidemic and famine subsided, the time of Kumbh Mela arrived. On every Kumbh Mela, Sages, Maharishis and Saints from all corners of the country and abroad used to gather at Maharishi

Bharadwaj's Prayag Ashram. Maharishi Bharadwaj and all his disciples used to manage the entire arrangements of the Kumbh Mela. This was a very difficult task in which the Ashram successfully managed the arrangements for the stay and food of thousands of visitors. A message was received by Maharishi Bharadwaj from the Ashram of the Guru of Aryakul, Maharishi Vashishtha that he was coming for Sangam bath in Prayag to participate in the Kumbh Mela along with his wife Arundhati and his fifty other disciples. The news of Maharishi Vashishtha and his wife Arundhati coming to Prayagraj to participate in Kumbh Mela spread a wave of happiness in the entire Prayag Gurukul. Arrangements for the welcome and comfortable stay of Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha, Gurumaa Arundhati and the group accompanying them started being made in Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram. The responsibility of welcoming Gurumaa and her comfortable stay was given to mother Sushila and daughter Kurtaki and Maharishi Bharadwaj himself made arrangements for the welcome and comfortable stay of Maharishi Vashishtha, the best Guru of Aryakul in a special guest house. The Kumbh Mela was and even now is an important festival of Sanatan Dharma in which thousands of devotees from across Aryavarta and abroad bathe at the various Kumbh Mela sites of Haridwar, Prayag, Ujjain, and Nashik to purify their bodies and secure longevity. The Purna Kumbha(Full Kumbh) is held at each of these sites every twelfth year when the Sun and Moon simultaneously enter Capricorn on the new Moon day. Prayag, the confluence of Mother Ganga, Mother Yamuna, and Mother Saraswati, holds special significance for this sacred bath. The Kumbh Mela is a time for bathing in nectar and drinking nectar. It is believed that at this time, nectar continuously flows in the sacred stream of Mother Ganga. Therefore, this period signifies to awake the consciousness of every Aryan person. According to mythology, this festival is linked to the battle between Gods and demons for the pot of nectar obtained from the churning of the ocean. It is believed that the churning of the ocean yielded 14 gems, out of which poison emerged first and the pot of nectar emerged in the last. The competition for drinking nectar from the Amrit-Ghat (pot of nectar) escalated into a war between the Gods and demons. At that time, Indra's son Jayant fled with the pot to protect the nectar from the demons. The war lasted for twelve years. During this time, the Gods Sun, Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn assisted in protecting the Amrit-Ghat. It is believed that during these twelve years,

when Indra's son Jayant placed the Amrit-Ghat at twelve locations, a few drops of nectar spilled. The Kumbh Mela is celebrated at these locations and at the same planetary alignments. According to the Shruti descriptions, eight of these twelve sacred places are in the heavens and four are on earth. The Kumbh Mela is held at these four locations every twelve years. The astronomical conditions occurring in this context are also mentioned in the Skanda Purana.

**पद्मिनी नायके मेघे कुम्भराशि गते गुरौ ।  
गंगा द्वारे भवेद्योगः कुम्भनाम्रातदोत्तमः ॥**

**Padmini Nayake Meshe Kumbharashi Gate Gurou.  
Ganga Dvare Bhavedyogah Kumbhanamratadottamah.**

The auspicious day of the Kumbh Mela arrived. Maharishi Bharadwaj received news that Maharishi Vashishtha and his entourage were proceeding towards the Ashram and would arrive shortly. Maharishi Bhardwaj accompanied by his wife Sushila, adopted daughter Kurtaki and other respected Sages of the Ashram, immediately arrived at the Ashram's gate with garlands of flowers to welcome them all. When Maharishi Vashishtha entered the Ashram, he was accorded a grand welcome with garlands and chanting of mantras. Maharishi Bhardwaj prostrated on the holy feet of Maharishi Vashishtha. Kurtaki and the other Sages also prostrated before Maharishi Vashishtha and mother Arundhati.

Mother Sushila welcomed Gurumaa Arundhati with her daughter Kurtaki and requested her to come to their hut. Maharishi Vashishtha and all accompanied Sages proceeded to the special guest rooms with Maharishi Bhardwaj prepared for them.

During the Kumbh festival, new celebrations were held daily at the Prayag Ashram and Gurukul. A fortnight passed thus. Maharishi Vashishtha's guest room was constantly thronged by various emperors and Sages from Aryavarta, meeting and discussing matters with him. At the conclusion of the Kumbh festival, Maharishi Bharadwaj bid farewell to all the guests but requested Maharishi Vashishtha to stay for a few more days. Maharishi

Vashistha in a deep trance said to Maharishi Bharadwaj, 'O great sage, I am blessed to have met you and your family on this Kumbh festival. Besides visiting you and the fortunate Sushila and bathing in the Ganges, I had another important objective. To fulfill that objective, I would like to spend some time with you and your daughter Kurtaki. Please allow me to do so.'

The omniscient Maharishi Bharadwaj already had an idea about this important purpose, yet he wanted to hear it from the very mouth of Maharishi Vashisth. Maharishi Bharadwaj was overwhelmed. He immediately sent a messenger to call his daughter Kurtaki to come to the guest room. On receiving the message, daughter Kurtaki rushed to the guest room of Sage Vashishtha. She thought tht she was so fortunate that her father's Guru highly revered God-like Maharishi Vashisth has invited her to meet him. Thking this, tears of love rolled down her eyes.

Upon arriving at the guestr room, she fell at the feet of Maharishi Vashisth with tearful eyes and said swee and humble words, 'O Most Revered One, what are your orders for me?'"\'

Maharishi Vashisth immediately embraced Kurtaki and said, 'Daughter, you know that your father Maharishi Kurtuk was one of my most beloved disciples. He was born to attain salvation. I am especially pleased to know that he is at the feet of the Lord having attained liberation with the blessings of Lord Parashurama and resides in Saket Dham. Every person has a purpose for coming to this earth. They live until that purpose is fulfilled and upon fulfillment, they attain the Lord's abode or take rebirth according to their deeds. Maharishi Kurtuk's birth was to have a daughter like you and to attain salvation. Having achieved both, he is seated in Saket Dham now. Similarly, you too were born for a special purpose, for the Lord's work. Lord Vishnu will soon descend upon this earth in human form to grant salvation to the demons and establish Dharma on earth. All the Gods and Goddesses who will assist him in this task are also gradually descending upon the earth in one form or another. Your birth has also taken place in that same sequence.'

'I was born for the Lord's work,' Kurtaki's hair stood on end with joy upon hearing these words. The Vice-Chancellor was astonished and tears of unending love flowed from her eyes. Thinking that the Lord who is difficult to attain even for Sages had chosen her to carry out His work, her tears of love remained unstoppable. She wet the Maharishi's feet with her tears. With tearful eyes, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki said, 'O Lord, please tell me immediately about the Lord's work. I can not wait to hear. Every moment is passing like an aeon. What is the reason for my birth? You are an omniscient being; please shed light on this as well.'

Maharishi Vashisth then said in a sweet voice, 'Of course daughter. I will also tell you the story of your previous birth. Now learn about the work that the Lord has chosen for you.'

Maharishi Vashisth continued, 'Daughter, you are well aware that Jai and Vijay were the two beloved gate keepers of Lord Hari whom the Sanakadik Rishis in anger cursed to be born on this earth in Tamasi bodies. Hearing this severe curse from the Sanakadik Rishis, Jai and Vijay became frightened and began to beg for forgiveness. At that very moment, Lord Vishnu also arrived there. Jai and Vijay began to pray to Lord Vishnu requesting him to relinquish the curse of the Rishis. Lord Vishnu then told them that the curse of the Rishis can never go in vain. You both will have to go and take birth on earth. After suffering the consequences of your arrogance, you will both return to me in Saket. You both have two options to return to Saket. The first is that if you remain my devotees on Earth, you will return to Saket after seven life-times. The second is that if you remain my enemies on Earth, you will return to Saket after three life-times, because in those three life-times, I will kill you. Jai and Vijay did not want to remain on Earth for seven life-times so, they accepted the second option. These same Jai and Vijay incarnated on Earth in their first birth in the Satyayuga era as Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. Lord Vishnu killed Hiranyaksha in the form of a boar (Varaha) and Hiranyakashipu in the form of Narasimha (Lion), spreading the glorious fame of his devotee Prahlad. Now, in their second birth in the Treta yuga, Jai and Vijay have incarnated as Ravana and Kumbhakarna. To kill him as per His promise, Lord Vishnu will soon incarnate in human form as Dasharatha's son Shri Ram in Ayodhya.

Maharishi Vashistha continued, 'After their births, both Ravana and Kumbhakaran worshipped Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva, and received the boon of near immortality. Ravana possesses the nectar in his navel. No weapon can kill him with this nectar-pool. To kill Ravana, it is necessary to dry up this nectar-pool. This task is only possible with the Agni-astra. You must worship the Lord Agni and under the guidance of Maharishi Bharadwaj invent this Agni-astra. After inventing it, you must wait for Lord Ram in the forest with the Agni-astra. During Lord Ram's exile, when Ravana will abduct mother Sita, His consort, the Lord will come to you. Then, Lord Himself will impart the knowledge of the new form of devotion and grant you salvation (Nav-Vidha-Bhakti Gyaan). You should hand over this Agni-astra to Him during this meeting.'

'The Lord Himself which is rare even for Sages, will appear before me, an ordinary woman, and He will give me the knowledge of the new method of devotion (Nav-Vidha-Bhakti) and grant me salvation. I am overwhelmed Prabhu. Lord, I feel an unparalleled joy upon hearing these words. I will immediately begin worshipping the God of Fire under the guidance of my Gurudev and father figure Maharishi Bharadwaj. After receiving His boon, I will certainly invent the Agni-astra with the blessings of both of you Sages. I do have one more question, Lord. I am the Vice-Chancellor here at Gurudev Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul. How will it be possible for me to go to the forest? Please explain to me in detail,' overwhelmed with emotion Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki said.

'Daughter, simply worship the God of Fire for now and receive His boon. Investigate the Agni-astra under the guidance of Maharishi Bharadwaj. When the time comes, everything will become clear to you. Arrangements for your travel to the forest will also be made. Yes, one more thing, I know that you are proficient in both weapons and espionage. You have to further develop these skills. You have to understand all the customs and traditions of the Bhil community of the forest forest in detail. It should appear as if you are a part of the Bhil society. In this, Acharya Mangala, the daughter of Rishi Anant, a disciple of Maharishi Matanga, who is your disciple in the Gurukul, will be very helpful. Maharishi Bharadwaj will now have to search for another Vice Chancellor,' Maharishi Vashistha said.

Maharshi Vashishtha further said, 'Okay daughter, now you and Maharishi Bharadwaj can rest. Tomorrow, I will tell you about your previous birth and the reason why Lord Hari has chosen you for this task

## Kurtaki's Previous Life

At the behest of Gurudev Arya Shrestha Maharishi Vashishtha, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki returned to her hut to be with Gurumaataa Sushila, but she left her heart at Maharishi Vashishtha's feet. The entire night passed in tossing and turning. She did not sleep for a moment. She was eagerly awaiting for the next day when Maharshi Vashishtha would tell her about her past life.

'What did I do in my previous birth that the Lord specifically has chosen me to carry out His work?' she was constantly thinking.

Finally, the time of Brahmamuhurta arrived. Kurtaki got up, bathed in the Ganges River and tried to concentrate on her meditation. She was not able to concentrate on meditation today. Shortly after she returned from the banks of the Ganges to her hut in the Ashram, she was summoned by Maharishi Vashishtha. She immediately ran towards the special guest room and prostrated herself before both the Sages, Maharshi Vashistha and Maharshi Bhardwaj, and sat down in a corner of the room.

'Come closer, daughter,' she heard Maharishi Vashistha's sweet words.

Slowly and hesitantly, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki moved a little closer to Maharishi Vashistha.

'O daughter, your eyes are telling me that you did not sleep the entire night and spent the night in devotion to God. You had the same love for Hari in your previous life,' Maharishi Vashistha said.

Maharishi Vashistha continued to say, "This is a story of the Satyayuga period when Hiranyakashipu ruled this earth. He was a very tyrannical and cruel ruler. Your father in your previous life, Maharishi Anand, was himself a disciple of the sage Narada. At that time, his gurukul was considered the best in Aryavarta. He lived a peaceful life in his Ashram with over 200 disciples imparting knowledge to them. He was a devoted devotee of Lord Vishnu. By His grace, a very beautiful and exceptionally intelligent

daughter was born to him, and he named her Anandi. That Anandi, daughter, was you.'

Maharsh Vashishtha continued, 'At that very moment, Lord Vishnu in the form of Varaha killed Hiranyakashipu's brother Hiranyaksha. This incident enraged Hiranyakashipu and he began to hate Lord Vishnu. He knew that Lord Vishnu was extremely powerful. He would need divine weapons to defeat him, so, to obtain them, he planned to perform penance to Lord Brahma. He went to the forest to meditate on Lord Brahma. After his departure to the forest for penance, Lord Indra saw an opportune moment to take revenge. Indradev abducted Hiranyakashipu's wife Empress Kayadu from her palace. He was taking Empress Kayadu to Indraloka when he met Brahmarishi Narada on the way. Brahmarishi Narada then advised Indra that kidnapping the Empress in the Emperor's absence was not only a highly indecent act but also a grave sin. Hearing Brahmarishi Narada's words, Indra became enlightened and fell at his feet and asked, "O Brahmarishi, what should I do now?"

'The Brahmarishi Narad ordered him to immediately release Empress Kayadu. Trembling with fear, Indrdeva handed over Empress Kayadu to Brahmrishi Narad.'

'Brahmarishi Narada then brought Empress Kayadu to the Ashram of his disciple, your father Maharishi Anand and said, "O Maharishi, I leave Empress Kayadu in your care until Hiranyakashipu returns from his penance."

"Your father then respectfully kept the Empress in his Ashram.'

'In due course, Empress Kayadu gave birth to a very handsome and talented son, whom Brahmarishi Narada himself named 'Prahlad.'

'Daily recitations of Sri Hari Katha, Hari Naam Sankirtan and Yajnas were held in your father's Ashram. Furthermore, Brahmarishi Narada also visited frequently, maintaining a vibrant atmosphere of devotion. Empress Kayadu and her son Prahlad listened to Hari Katha with great interest and

also began chanting the Lord's name. By the age of five, Prahlad had become a treasure trove of knowledge. Being a devotee of Lord Hari, he remained immersed in his devotion day and night.'

'Having received the boon of immortality in his understanding from Lord Brahma, after sometime Hiranyakashipu, returned to his capital. The boon he received was that he will not die during the day, nor at night, neither in the morning, nor in the evening, neither in the sky, nor on the earth, neither by any weapon, nor by any weapon, neither by man, nor by animal, nor by bird, nor by God, nor by demon, nor in any month of the twelve months. Upon reaching the capital, he learned that Indra had dared to abduct Empress Kayadu but due to the intervention of Brahmarishi, she was safe in the Ashram of Maharishi Anand. He immediately went to Maharishi Anand's Ashram and brought his empress and son back.

'Having received the boon from Lord Brahma, Emperor Hiranyakashipu began to consider himself immortal. He had a special enmity with Lord Vishnu because he had killed his brother. Therefore, he ordered everyone in his kingdom to stop worshipping Lord Hari and instead worship him. Prahlad was now immersed in the devotion of Lord Vishnu. His own son Prahlad disobeying this order began worshipping Lord Vishnu in his own palace.'

'During that time, Maharishi Atri organized a grand Yajna (sacrifice) inviting your father as the chief guest and entrusting him with the responsibility of conducting the Yajna. Your father went then to Maharishi Atri's Ashram to conduct the Yajna with you. After successful completion of the Yajna, when your father Maharishi Ananda returned to his Ashram, he found the Ashram completely burned down. Your mother and most of her disciples had been killed. Some disciples managed to escape with their lives. When these remaining disciples learned that Maharishi Ananda had returned to his Ashram, they also gathered courage to return and recounted the entire incident to their Gurudev.'

'In your father's absence, Hiranyakashipu attacked your Ashram with his soldiers. The surviving disciples told that upon hearing of Hiranyakashipu's attack, your mother, Gurumaa, personally came forward to protect the

Ashram and her disciples holding the horses of Hiranyakashipu's chariot. Your mother challenged that evil man and expressed her anger at his cowardice in committing this atrocity against helpless Brahmins, Sages, wives, sons and daughters of Sages. But Hiranyakashipu blinded by his arrogance did not see this sin and drove his horse over your mother. Unfortunately, your mother died immediately. He then ordered his soldiers to burn down the Ashram.

Your father was enraged on hearing this, but he did not consider it appropriate to curse Hiranyakashipu, the Brahmin son of Maharishi Kashyap.

He loved your mother deeply. He could not bear her separation, and gradually his body began to weaken. He soon left for Saket Dham entrusting to you the responsibility to his beloved disciples. It was as if the world had ended for you. The images of both mother and father had been constantly in your head. One day when you were lying in Ashram feeling helpless and orphaned, a thought of committing suicide occurred in your mind. Fortunately, Brahmarishi Narada arrived there at that time to see your welfare. Brahmarishi embraced you and gave you self-knowledge. On hearing words of Brahmrishi Narada, you gave up the idea of suicide, but your anger towards Hiranyakashipu did not subside. You devoted yourself to the devotion of Shri Hari and performed severe penance. While you were engrossed in penance, Shri Hari took the form of Narasimha and killed Hiranyakashipu. Pleased with your penance, when Shri Hari appeared before you and asked you to ask for a boon, you being unaware of the killing of Hiranyakashipu, asked for the boon of being instrumental in his death.'

'Then the Lord smiled and said, "Daughter, I have killed Hiranyakashipu already. But your wish will not go in vain. In the Treta Yuga, when Hiranyakashipu is reborn as Ravana and I will once again descend to earth as Shri Ram to slay him, you will help me in slaying him. Daughter, Prahlad is now seated on the throne of Aryavarta and has completely rebuilt your Ashram. All your disciples are waiting for your penance to end. Now go to your Ashram and while managing your father's Ashram impart the

teachings you have received from your father and the Brahmarishi Narada to the disciples.'

'Hearing the heart-warming words of Shri Hari and following his command, you returned to your Ashram and continued teaching throughout your life. When the time of death approached, you voluntarily attained samadhi through yoga. Now that Hiranyakashipu has been reborn as Ravana, you have assumed this body as per the words of Lord Hari and now you have to do the Lord's work.'

After narrating this sweet story, Maharishi Vashistha calmed down.

Vashistha's words left Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki bewildered. Wetting his feet with tears of love, she bowed to him repeatedly and said, 'O Lord, it will be so. With the blessings of Gurudev Maharishi Bharadwaj, I will perform severe penance to appease the God of Fire and learn the art of Agni-astra from him soon. Then, under Gurudev's guidance I will invent the Agni-astra.'

After staying in Prayag for a few more days at Maharishi Bharadwaj's request, Aryaguru Maharishi Vashistha returned to his Ashram with his group. Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki's life changed after this. She no longer had any interest in any work. The name of Lord Hari remained on her tongue all the time. Then one day, after seeking blessings from her Gurudev Maharishi Bharadwaj, she left for the caves of the Himalayas to worship the Sun God.

She chose Maa Gangotri as her place of penance. For many years, she performed penance to please the Sun God by chanting the worship mantras of the Sun God described in the Rigveda.

**ॐ हां हीं हों सः सूर्याय नमः ।**

**Om Hram Hrim Hron Sah Suryaya Namah.**

Finally, pleased with her penance the Sun God appeared one day. The omniscient Sun God then imparted knowledge about the Agni Astra. He also imparted knowledge of the Agni Purana and explained the entire process of making the Agni-astra.

With the knowledge of the Agni Purana, Kurtaki returned to Gurudev Maharishi Bharadwaj's Prayagraj Ashram. Here, Gurudev Maharishi Bharadwaj heartily welcomed her and appointed her as the head of the Ashram.

With the knowledge imparted by Agnidev and the guidance of Maharishi Bharadwaj, she soon invented the Agni-astra (Agni Arrow). From her disciple Mangala, daughter of Rishi Anant, she learnt all the customs and traditions of the Bhil community and gained proficiency in espionage. Now the process of her transfer to the forest was awaited.

## Mangala

As requested by Maharishi Vashishtha, Maharishi Shringi arrived at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram in Prayag to request the services of Kurtuki for Atyodhya kingdom. Maharishi Bharadwaj and his disciples welcomed him with full respect and arrangements were made for his comfortable stay in a special guest room.

After waking up at Brahmanuhurta the next morning, bathing in the Ganges River, and meditating, Maharishi Shringi and Maharishi Bharadwaj engaged in a cordial conversation. Maharishi Bharadwaj expressed his gratitude to Maharishi Shringi for visiting his Ashram in Prayag. The meeting of the two Sages was like the confluence of mother Ganga and mother Yamuna. Maharishi Bharadwaj was delighted to learn that Maharishi Shringi had come to his Ashram from Ayodhya after celebrating the first birthday of prince Shri Ram. Surely, he must have brought a message from the Aryakul Guru Maharishi Vashishtha. After inquiring about everyone's well-being, he politely asked Maharishi Shringi, 'Prabhu, what are your orders for me?'

Maharishi Shringi then described in details the disturbance and unrest caused by the demons in the forest. Unfortunately, none of the Emperor Dasharatha's representatives can withstand the might of these demons, nor can the spies provide any significant information. Emperor Dasharatha needs a person skilled in weapons and intelligence to represent him in the forest. At Maharishi Vashishtha's suggestion, I have come to you to seek the services of Kurtaki for this task.'

Maharishi Bharadwaj remembered clearly now the words spoken by the Aryakul Guru Maharishi Vashishtha at the Kumbh Mela that Kurtaki was born solely for the work of Lord Rama.

Maharishi Bharadwaj immediately sent a message to Kurtaki inviting her to the meeting. Upon her arrival to the guest room, Kurtaki prostrated before the two Sages and sat down on the floor waiting for their orders. Both the Maharshies and Acharya Kurtaki then began a secret discussion.

'Daughter Kurtaki, the time has come to follow the instructions given to you by Maharishi Vashishtha at the Kumbh Mela. Maharishi Shringi himself has arrived with a plan to take you to the forest as Emperor Dasharatha's chief representative and spy. Prepare to depart with him. Maharishi Shringi himself will provide the full details of the plan,' Maharishi Bharadwaj said in pleasant words.

Maharishi Shringi then began speaking in sweet words, "Daughter Kurtaki, I know that the Aryakul Guru Maharishi Vashishtha has already discussed this matter with you. I also know that following his words, you performed rigorous penance to worship Agnidev and got knowledge of the Agni Purana from him and under the guidance of Maharishi Bharadwaj, invented the Agni-astra. Now the time has come for you to depart to the forest of Aranya (Aranya Van) for the work of Lord Ram. I have come to fetch you myself. We will depart from here for the Ashram of Maharishi Matanga in Aranya Van. At Maharishi Matanga's Ashram, a Bhil girl, Shramana is waiting for you. Upon reaching the Ashram, you will take her place and the Bhil girl Shramana will take your place at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram. In Aranya Van, everyone will know you as Shramana. You may call it a divine play or a coincidence, your height, physique, and appearance are exactly like Shramana's except that your skin is fairer than Shramana's. By using herbs and exposing your skin to the Sun, you should darken your complexion slightly and no one will be able to distinguish between you and Shramana. Before taking you to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram, I will stay here at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram for a few days so that you can fully embody Shramana. In this matter, you will be guided by your disciple Mangala, the daughter of Rishi Ananta. Mangala, the daughter of Rishi Amnanta is a close friend of Shramana. They did spend their childhood together so, she knows every habit, demeanor, and behavior of Shramana. Now, meet her and gather detailed information about Shramana. When you have completely become Shramana's embodiment, we will depart to the forest.

With these sweet words from Maharishi Shringi, Kurtaki felt as if she had found the whole world. She had been waiting for this moment for long. She couldn't wait any longer. She had to embody Shramana as quickly as possible. Kurtaki left the meeting room after bowing her head at the feet

of the both the Sages and immediately sent a message to Mangala through a disciple to meet her immediately.

After Kurtaki left, Maharishi Bharadwaj and Maharishi Shringi began discussing further plan. They decided that the time had come now to inform Maharishi Matanga of this plan. Maharishi Bharadwaj immediately sent a disciple to call his beloved disciple Acharya Pandurang. Upon arrival, Acharya Pandurang bowed his head at the feet of both the Sages. Maharishi Bharadwaj then made Acharya Pandurang swear to secrecy and explaining the entire plan immediately ordered him to proceed to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram. Bowing his head, Acharya Pandurang immediately departed for Maharishi Matanga's Ashram to obey Maharishi Bharadwaj's orders.

Mangala was the daughter of Rishi Anant who was a beloved disciple of Maharishi Matanga. She had come to Prayag Gurukul a few years ago from his Ashram in the forest (Aranya Van) to acquire knowledge of Ayurveda medicine. Mangala's father Rishi Anant was an Ayurveda Acharya at Maharishi Matanga's Ashram. His life was dedicated not only to the health of the Ashram residents but also to the entire forest community. His small Ayurveda laboratory constantly researched new medicines. Rishi Anant knew that Maharishi Bharadwaj had acquired knowledge of Ayurveda and medicine from Lord Indra himself and therefore, there was no greater Ayurveda expert than him in this era. Maharishi Divodas and Maharishi Dhanvantari, the eminent Ayurvedic physicians themselves acquired knowledge of Ayurveda medicine from Maharishi Bharadwaj and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki. To improve the medical system in his region, he needed the knowledge and expertise of Maharishi Bharadwaj and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki. Therefore, he sent his daughter Mangala to the Prayag Gurukul to study Ayurveda medicine under the guidance of Maharishi Matanga.

Vice-Chancellor Acharya Kurtaki was lost in memories. A few years ago, Mangala had come to Prayag from Maharishi Matanga's Ashram in the Aranya forest. Her dark complexion, strong build and attire resembling that of a forest dweller, yet her profound knowledge of Sanskrit had astonished Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki. As their conversation progressed, Vice-

Chancellor Kurtaki was also deeply impressed by Mangala's knowledge of Ayurveda. Within a short time, Mangala became one of the Vice-Chancellor's most beloved students. However, the Vice-Chancellor never imagined that Mangala would play such a significant role in fulfilling her life's purpose. Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki was lost in these thoughts about Mangala then she felt as if someone had touched her feet and bowed down to her. When she opened her eyes, she found Mangala standing in front of her. Her heart was filled with love for Mangala. She rose from her seat and embraced Mangala.

'Mangala, I have called you to inquire about your very dear friend, Shramana. Tell me everything you know about Shramana,' Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki said.

Mangala was surprised to see the Vice-Chancellor's eagerness to learn about Shramana, but out of courtesy she could not muster the courage to ask the reason from her Guru and Vice-Chancellor. It did not take long for the psychological expert Vice-Chancellor Acharya Kurtaki to understand Mangala's curiosity. She then told Mangala the entire story without concealing anything. Mangala was overjoyed. The thought that she would play a role, may be a small one, in the task of of Lord Vishnu's incarnation Shri Ram in the Treta Yuga brought tears to her eyes. Her hair stood on end with excitement. Looking at the Vice-Chancellor with profound gratitude, she washed her feet with her tears. It would be no exaggeration to call Mangala, the daughter of Rishi Ayurvedacharya Anant, a disciple of Maharishi Matanga in his Ashram, a precious gem of a woman on this earth. At an age when women aspire to establish their own homes and experience motherhood, this woman dedicated her life to the study of Ayurvedic science and the discovery of new medicines to alleviate the suffering of society. She was the epitome of sacrifice, penance, and tolerance. She was a pure, selfless, virtuous, tolerant, pure-character Brahmadhini, a scholar and inquisitive about the essence of Brahman. She wanted to bring immortality to the people through her research on the science of Ayurveda. Mangala had not the slightest attachment to worldly things or material pleasures. She only yearned for Ayurveda and spiritual knowledge. She wanted to share and develop further her father's Ayurveda knowledge and take it to the ultimate limit, granting immortality.

It was heard that Maharishi Matanga himself once explained to her the duties of womanhood and advised her to marry a Sage and enter into family life, but she instead engaged in a debate with Maharishi Matanga.

‘Respected Maharishi Pitamah, the crown jewel of the Aryan clan, please forgive my audacity. I accept whatever punishment you impose on me for opening my mouth before you. Please answer a few of my questions. Can a family life be the only goal of an Aryan daughter? Can it satisfy my hunger for spiritual knowledge? Every day I see thousands of people dying from disease. Is my resolve to research new medicines in an effort to free these poor people from disease inappropriate?’ Mangala asked, touching the feet of Maharishi Matanga with folded hands.

Maharishi Matanga was astonished by these questions from Mangala, the innocent young Sage's daughter. With a joyful heart, he embraced his proud Aryan daughter and said, ‘Daughter, I am extremely pleased with you. Your vow of social service has won my heart. I bless you to achieve great fame and expertise in Ayurveda. I will speak to your father Rishi Ananta today and with his consent, will arrange for you to be sent to the Prayag Gurukul under the guidance of Maharishi Bharadwaj and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki to study further science of Ayurveda. Maharishi Bharadwaj is my close friend. He will certainly admit you to his Gurukul and provide you with the proper education.’

Thus, Mangala's arrival at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Gurukul, Prayagraj, was set. Our humble obeisances to Mangala, a Brahnavadini scholar, thirsty for knowledge, a life of altruism, a social worker, and a selfless person.

‘Guru Acharya (this is how Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki was addressed by his disciples), when I first saw you at the Gurukul entrance, I wondered how my friend Shramana arrived here before me. You and Shramana are truly alike. The only difference is your fair skin while my friend Shramana is darker’, said Mangala.

‘Well, the day has now ended and it's time for my meditation. We' will discuss this again tomorrow morning. Until then, you too, rest,’ Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki instructed Mangala.

## Shramana

The next day after a quick snack before sunrise, Mangala arrived at Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki's hut. After touching her feet and other courtesies, she sat down next to her. Upon receiving the Vice-Chancellor's permission, she began speaking in sweet words, 'Guru Acharya, from the time I was born, I was very close to my father. I ate with him, slept with him and even sat on the cushion with him when he was treating patients in his dispensary. My father taught me how to make medicine packets so, if nothing else, I would simply prepare the medicines packets he prescribed for the patients. When he would mix herbs in the laboratory and grind them in a mortar, I would snatch the mortar from him and helped him in grinding the medicines into the mixture. I felt immense joy and pride in doing all this for my father. I felt like, 'Oh God, if I were not there, how much difficult it would be for my father. Now that I understand, I realize how much my stubbornness and interference must have hindered my father's work. My father's affection for me was incomparable. Despite knowing how much my stubbornness disrupted his work, I never saw him to be angry or scolding me. I must have been about five years old. One morning, I woke up and saw that my father was not in the hut. I assumed he must have gone to his dispensary. My mother was busy extracting butter from curd. She did not notice me so, I quietly left the hut and headed towards my father's dispensary. When I reached the dispensary, I saw that my father was not there either. I had often seen him going to the forest to gather herbs before Sun rise. I had also gone with him to gather herbs many times. I thought that my father must have gone to the forest to gather herbs so, I too headed towards the forest to find him. How could a five-year-old girl know the terrors of the forest? It was a dense and terrifying forest. I had barely made to a short distance; I lost my way. In panic, I hurried forward trying to find a safe place. But due to my ignorance of the route, I rather moved to a very unsafe part of the forest inhabited by ferocious and carnivorous animals. I saw a lion roaring towards me. I could not understand how to save myself from this beast. Then, I saw a girl about my age jumping on the lion. She looked like a forest girl. The lion in anger jerked his body and threw the girl to the ground. Now the lion's attention was focused on the girl and it pounced to kill her. The girl was screaming

something in some other language, possibly a forest language. Meanwhile, a fierce battle ensued between the lion and the girl. The girl was extremely agile and was outmaneuvering the lion's every move. But she was still a child. She was covered in blood and badly injured. A group of forest dwellers presumably hearing her cries quickly arrived and drove the lion away from the girl, first with the shrill sound of drums and flashes of fire and then shot him down with their arrows. My life was certainly saved but the girl was unconscious and struggling for her life. Apparently, my father was also gathering herbs nearby. These sounds attracted his attention and he immediately rushed to the scene. All the forest dwellers knew my father well and respected him greatly. Everyone bowed their heads in respect to him. Then, my father's eyes fell on the injured unconscious girl. He immediately picked her up in his lap and ran towards the hospital with the forest dwellers following behind him. Upon reaching the hospital, my father immediately began treating the girl. The wounds were deep. It took several hours for her to regain consciousness. She did regain her consciousness but it took several weeks for her to fully recover. I felt deeply guilty for the girl's condition. My father kept her in his clinic until she recovered. I would arrive early in the morning with food and try to talk to her but I could not understand her language nor could she understand mine. Yet, for some reason we became deeply attached to each other. My father had a deep knowledge of the forest dwellers' language. It was through him that I learned that she was Bhil princess Shramana, daughter of Bhil Sardar Shabar Sen. Thus, I first met Shramana. After Shramana's full recovery, her father Bhil Sardar Shabar Sen came to pick her up. As soon as I learned that Shramana was leaving the Ashram, I cried profusely that day. Moved by my tears, my father promised to take me to meet Shramana at Bhil Sardar Shabar Sen's residence whenever possible. He kept his promise. He would take me to Shramana's residence every second or third day. We had become close friends. Gradually, I began to understand her language and to some extent, she also began to understand mine. Some more time passed in this manner. Shramana was extremely agile, intelligent, and courageous. She had now started coming to the Ashram alone. Unfortunately, due to the opposition of some Aryan teachers that entry of non-Aryans into the Ashram was prohibited, she would not enter the Ashram but would stand

near the gate. She would call me in the voice of a bird and I would immediately come to the gate of Ashram to be with her.

Manghala continued, 'Shramana was very interested in learning about the Ashram's affairs. I began teaching Shramana everything my father used to teach me. Shramana quickly learnt basic Sanskrit. Meanwhile, I had also mastered the forest language perfectly. There was no longer any language barrier between us. Shramana's heart was a treasure trove of compassion. She loved all the animals and birds of the forest as much as she loved humans. Let me recount an incident. It was a scorching afternoon in the month of Jyeshtha (scorching summer season). It seemed as if the Sun God would only calm down after scorching the earth. I was sprinkling water repeatedly to cool the hut when suddenly a human voice called out to my father from the Ashram's gate. Father immediately recognized the voice. It was the voice of the Bhil chieftain Shabar Sen. He immediately left the hut and reached the Ashram's gate. With folded hands, Shabar Sen asked my father if his daughter Shramana was there with Mangala. We cannot find her. Father's negative answer discouraged Shabar Sen and he began to cry.

He said to my father, 'I wonder where my daughter is in this hot afternoon. What is she doing? is she even alive?'

My father calmed him down and then, along with Shabar Sen and his group they set out to find Shramana. They had gone about a mile into the forest when they saw Shramana sleeping under a tree with a deer and her cub. Human nature is to see only inauspiciousness even in auspiciousness. Seeing this, Shabar Sen was terrified. He thought the deer would kill his delicate daughter at any moment. He immediately drew an arrow from his quiver. But then my father signaled him not to shoot. The deer had become the protector of both her cub and Shramana. To lift Shramana, Shabar Sen approached the deer. Seeing Shabar Sen, the deer probably thought this creature had come to harm her cub or Shramana so, she got into an attacking posture. Just then, Shramana's eyes opened. She coaxed the deer saying, 'This is my father, calm down, deer.'

Such was her behavior that even animals loved her with all their hearts. This incident had a profound impact on Shabar Sen's heart. His feelings for animals changed. It was heard that after this incident, he stopped going hunting in the forest. Time passed on. Shramana turned twelve. As per Bhil tradition, Shabar Sen arranged her marriage with a Bhil prince. One day when she woke up in the morning, she saw numerous goats and buffaloes tied at the gate of her house. She immediately went to her mother and asked, 'Why are so many animals here?'

Her mother lovingly told her, 'Daughter, your wedding will be held tomorrow and these animals have been brought for the feast. By sacrificing them, the forest deity will be appeased and a feast will be prepared.'

Shramana was at a loss. Mangala said that killing an animal is a sin and as a result of this sin, one must suffer in the terrifying fires of hell for eternity after death. This sin will condemn me and my family to hell. At this thought, Shramana shuddered and as night fell, she left her home and ran towards the Ashram. At the Ashram gate, she called out to me in a strange bird-like voice. This was second quarter of the night. I was astonished. I immediately woke my father. Something bad must have happened to Shramana; otherwise, she would not have come to the Ashram so late at night. Father and I immediately ran to the Ashram gate. We saw Shramana sobbing and crying. Father hugged her and tried to calm her down and inquired about her well-being. Then Shramana told us everything. She was determined not to return to her father's house.

My father could not keep her in the Ashram due to opposition from other Ashram residents, but an idea immediately struck to him. An elderly forest dweller named Sajag, an employee of the cowshed lived in a hut at a short distance from the Ashram. My father took Shramana to his hut. He woke him up and recounted the entire incident. He swore him to secrecy and requested him to allow Shramana to stay there. My father promised the old forest dweller to bear all Shramana's living expenses. The old forest dweller was grateful for his generosity and promised to treat Shramana like his own daughter. Now relieved, my father returned to our hut. When Shramana's mother woke up in the morning, she could not find Shramana.

She searched everywhere but could not find her. Frightened, she called out to her husband Shabar Sen and told him that Shramana was missing.

Shabar Sen smiled and said to his wife, 'There is no need to worry so much. She must have gone somewhere in the forest to meet her animal friends. She will be back soon. She is getting married soon. Now she will be leaving this house for her in-law's house so, she will not be able to meet these friends. She must have gone to bid them farewell.'

Guests have commenced arriving for the marriage ceremony. So, after consoling Shravana's mother, Shabar Sen went to welcome them. Noon passed. It was already the third quarter of the day but Shravana was still nowhere to be seen. Shravana's mother became very nervous. She found her husband Shabar Sen among the group of guests and informed him of her anxiety and restlessness.

Surprised and bewildered, Shabar Sen said, 'What? Shramana has not returned from the forest yet?'

He was very worried for Shramana's well-being now. Immediately, he set out to search for Shramana taking with him all the guests and members of his community. While searching and calling out for Shramana, evening approached but Shramana was nowhere to be found. Praying to God in his heart for Shramana's well-being, he muttered, 'Oh God, May nothing harm come to my daughter. Has she become a prey to some wild animal? No, no, that can not be. If that would have happened, some signs, like traces of her blood or some trace of a struggle would surely have been seen. But nothing of the sort was found.'

Then a thought struck to Shabar Sen who was deeply alarmed. May be Shramana had gone to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram? He knew that Shramana's close friend Mangala was the daughter of Ayurvedacharya Rishi Anant Dev and she visited them frequently. It was possible that Shramana would have gone to meet Mangala to bid her farewell. Still, it should not take so long. Surely, I should immediately go to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram and find out. Shabar Sen then headed to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram. Other members of his community and guests wanted

to accompany him but he refused to let them all come with him. Maharishi Matanga's Ashram is a sacred place. What is the point of going there with crowd? If Shramana was there, Maharishi Matanga himself would surely hand me over her. The Maharishi and all his disciples belong to the truthful Brahmin clan of the Aryan civilization. There is no place for opacity or deceit there. Praying in his heart to the forest deity for the well-being of the Shramana, Shabar Senran towards the Ashram of Maharishi Matanga.

## Maharishi Matanga

Shabar Sen held a deep reverence for Maharishi Matanga. On the way, old memories began to overwhelm him and he was lost in those thoughts.

He remembered an incident which occurred thirteen years ago. Shabar Sen was entering adulthood but was childless. His anxiety was growing not due to his own attachment to a son or daughter, but rather due to his inability to provide the Bhil community with a capable successor. It was a tradition in the Bhil community that after the death of a Bhil chieftain, only his son or daughter could succeed him. If unfortunately, a Bhil chieftain died childless, fierce competition for the inheritance would ensue among the Bhil community leading to unnecessary bloodshed and on occasion, division of the community. Shabar Sen's loyalty to his community was profound and he desired to avoid such a situation. He was lost in this deep thought when Singham, the priest of the forest God and his childhood friend arrived at his house. After exchanging courtesies, priest Singham asked him the reason for his distress. Shabar Sen opened his heart to his friend.

Priest Singham said with great seriousness, Sardar, this is certainly a matter of deep concern. I know very well that a section of the Bhil community is just waiting for your death so that his throne can be usurped. I too fear bloodshed and division of the community. I think there is a possibility. Maharishi Matanga is a realized Sage. His Ashram is nearby. If you receive his grace and blessings, you will surely be able to see the face of a child.'

'Maharishi Matanga is an Aryan Sage. Why would he listen to the prayers of a non-Aryan?" Shabar Sen bombarded his friend Singham with questions. Then the priest of the forest God told Sardar Shabar Sen about the origins of Maharishi Matanga.

Priest Singham said, 'O Friend, Maharishi Matanga is indeed a Maharishi who has attained Brahmatva in the Aryan clan but he is not an Aryan by birth but a Bhil. His mother was a Brahmin but his father was a Bhil. His

Brahmin mother fell in love with a Bhil youth. Because of this love, the Brahmin woman abandoned her Aryan community and married this Bhil youth establishing herself within the Bhil community. From this marriage, they had a son whom they named 'Matang'. Unfortunately, one day while hunting, this young man was severely injured by a wild animal and died. It was as if the Brahmin woman's world had been destroyed. Even after seven years of marriage, the Bhil community had not fully accepted her. She was fully convinced that even the Aryans would not accept her now. She became extremely worried about her son's future. Her son belonged neither to the Bhil community nor to the Aryan community. What would become of her son? Worried about her son, she approached the Aryan Guru, Maharishi Valmiki and narrated her plight. The Aryan Guru's heart melted and after purifying him, he installed him in the Aryan clan. Matanga must have been about five years old at this time. Although the Aryan Guru purified Matanga according to Aryan principles and also making him his disciple in an attempt to confer Brahmin status on him, some fundamentalist Aryans still refused to accept him as a Brahmin and continued to oppose him. The said that:

**चण्डालयोनौ जातेन नावाप्यं वै कथंचन।**

**Chandalayonau Jaten Navaapyam Vai Kathanchan.**

*A chandal (Bhil) cannot become a Brahmin.*

These words pierced heart of a five-year-old Matanga like an arrow. He said to the Aryan Guru Valmiki Ji, 'O Gurudev, there must be a way to ensure that I receive Universal acceptance for the position of Brahmatva.'

The Aryan Guru said, 'Of course son, you may. But tgo attain this, you will have to intensely worship Lord Indra and appease him and ask for a boon. Once Lord Indra accepts you as Brahma, no one will dare to oppose you.'

Then, with the blessings and guidance of the Aryan Guru, Matanga intensely worshipped Lord Indra and appeased him. Finally, pleased with his penance Lord Indra appeared and granted him the desired boon.

यथा ममाक्षया किर्तिर्भवेच्चापि पुरंदर।  
कर्तुमर्हसि तद् देव शीरसा त्वां प्रसादये ॥

**Yatha Mamakshaya Kirtirbhavechapi Purandar.  
Kartumarhasi Tad Dev ShirasaTtvaam Prasadaye.**

Indradev appeared before him and was pleased with his penance. Matanga bowed his head and said, 'O Indradev, please bless me so that I may become a heaven-traveling deity free from the opposition of Brahmins and Kshatriyas and I be worshipped and honored everywhere. May my everlasting fame spread. I bow my head at your feet and seek your blessings. Please grant this boon tgo me.'

Indraev then granted him the boon that all his wishes would be fulfilled.

छंदोदेव इति ख्यातः स्त्रीणां पुज्यो भविष्यसि ।  
किर्तिश्च ते तुला वत्स त्रिषु लोकेषु यास्यति ॥

**Chhandodev Iti Khyatah Strinam Pujyo Bhavishyasi.  
Kirtishrch Te Tula Vats Trishu Lokeshu Yasyati.**

Indradev granted the boon and said, 'O son, you will be revered by all men and women. You will be known as Chandodeva and your unparalleled fame will spread throughout the three worlds.'

'Thereafter, Matanga attained the status of a Brahmin which was accepted by all and he became known as Chandodeva Maharishi Matanga. He then established his Ashram in the forest of Aranya. His personality is so great that all Aryans and non-Aryans yearn to be blessed by him and no one can even think of displeasing him. Perhaps you know friend Shabar Sen that it is because of Maharishi Matanga's curse that the monkey king Bali fears to come to Rishyamuka Mountain. A demon named Dundubhi, overjoyed with his strength once approached the ocean God and challenged him to battle. The ocean God expressed his inability to fight with him and suggested that he should fight Himavan. Dundubhi

approached Himavan and began breaking his rocks and peaks. Himavan, a Sage himself and averse to warfare, advised Dundubhi to fight Indra's son Bali. He then challenged Bali the monkey king to a duel. Bali accepted his challenge, fought a duel and killed him. He threw his blood-soaked body a yojana away. On the way, drops of blood from the dead body of Dundubhi mouth landed on the Ashram of Maharishi Matanga. After purification, Maharishi Matanga was engaged in meditation at the time. The drops of blood not only defiled him but also disrupted his meditation. Maharishi Matanga was enraged and cursed Bali that if he came even a yojana closer to his Ashram, he would die. Maharishi Matanga is very powerful but his heart is very soft. I have full faith that he will definitely listen to your prayers and give you a solution. Do not be afraid Sardar, go to Maharishi Matanga.'

Then, gathering courage on the request of priest Singham, Shabar Sen decided to go to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram. He reached the Ashram's gate but did not have the courage to go inside. He just sat at the Ashram's gate. He remained sitting there for the whole night. When Maharishi Matanga woke up before Sun rise in the Brahma-muhurta next day and started going to Pampa Sarovar for his daily rituals and bath, he saw a shadow at the gate. It was still dark; therefore, he could not recognize whose shadow this shadow was?

Approaching this shadow, Maharishi Matanga said, 'Son, who are you and what do you want?'

Then Shabar Sen, calling out his name bowed down to Maharishi Matanga.

'O, Bhil Sardar Shabar Sen, it is you. What do you want, son? Tell me clearly,' Maharishi Matanga asked.

Shabar Sen's eyes began wet with tears. He felt like clinging to the Maharishi's feet. Then he thought that he was a non-Aryan Bhil and Maharishi was a great Aryan Guru. Touching his feet might defile him.

Gathering courage, he said, 'O Lord, I had a wish. I have come to your feet to seek guidance on how to fulfill it'

'I know Shabar Sen that you desire a child. A daughter is about to be born in your home. Her name will remain immortal as long as this land, water, and sky exist and with her you too will become immortal. Soon this divine girl will descend into your home. Now, go to Acharya Rishi Anant and obtain some medicines from him. Continue taking those medicines as per his instructions and wait for the right time', Maharshi Matanga said.

Listening these kind words of Maharshi, Shabar Sen felt as if he had got the entire world in blessing. To express his heartfelt gratitude to Maharshi Matanga, he prostrated himself before him once again. Maharshi Matanga departed for Pampa Sarovar and Shabar Sen waited there till morning so, he could obtain the medicines from Acharya Rishi Anant Dev Ji. In the morning, Shabar Sen sent a message to Acharya Rishi Anant Dev Ji through an Ashram resident requesting a meeting. Learning that Shabar Sen had been sitting at the Ashram gate all night waiting for him, Rishi Anant Dev Ji immediately rushed to the gate. Then Shabar Sen told him all what Maharshi Matanga blessed him and his command to meet him to take the medicines. Acharya Rishi Anant Dev was well aware of the significance of his Gurudev Maharshi Matanga's blessings.

Acharya Rishi Anant Dev said, 'You have received the Maharishi's blessing for a daughter and the Maharishi's words are never false. You may take some medicines but they are only a pretext. You will get a daughter with the Maharishi's blessings.'

Then Shabar Sen returned home with the medicines and as instructed by Rishi Anant Dev, the husband and wife began consuming them.

A year after blessings of Maharshi Matang, a daughter was born to Shabar Sardar Sabar Sen. Shabar Sen had seen the face of a child in elderly age so, the joy of him and the entire Bhil community knew no bounds. The celebrations continued for a month. When the daughter turned one month old, Shabar Sen conceived the idea of having Maharshi Matanga perform her naming ceremony. Taking the one-month-old daughter with him, he

and his wife set off for the Ashram. Call it coincidence or divine play, while Shabar Sen along with his wife and daughter were on their way to meet Maharishi Matanga, they happened to see the Maharishi near Pampa Sarovar. The couple prostrated before the Maharishi and placed their daughter at his feet. They were astonished when the Maharishi bowed down and immediately took the tiny girl in his arms and began kissing her. It was not normal that an untouchable Bhil girl would be given that respect by the great Aryan Guru Maharishi Matanga. Without saying a word, the Maharishi took the girl into his lap and came to the bank of Pampa Sarovar. He bathed her and said, 'O Shramana, you are welcome.'

Thus, Shabar Sen's daughter was named 'Shramana'. Shramana was born due to blessings of Maharishi so, she was Maharishi's daughter too. Therefore, if Shramana disappeared like this, the Maharishi would surely help him in finding her. If she is in the Ashram, he will surely hand her over to him or guide him an appropriate path. Shabar Sen was wandering in these thoughts when he reached the Ashram gate. Upon reaching the Ashram gate, tears welled in his eyes and he began to address the Maharishi with tearful words, 'Maharishi, help me, help me, protect me, please.'

The Maharishi had just awakened from his meditation. Hearing these emotional words, he immediately left his hut and went to the Ashram gate. There he saw Shabar Sen in a pitiful state, shedding tears and trying to say something.

'What happened, son? Tell me clearly', the Sage asked.

'Gurudev, Shramana was supposed to get married today. I do not know where the girl had gone. I searched her thoroughly. I searched the entire forest. I could not find her anywhere. Is she at the Ashram?' Shabar Sen asked in a very low voice.

'No, son, I have not heard of any girl coming to the Ashram. Do not worry. Your daughter has born on this earth to perform the task of Lord Vishnu's incarnation, Shri Ram. There is no question of her death. You should have come to me to discuss her future before her wedding. She is born not to

enter into marriage and have normal family life, but for a much higher purpose. Now go home and bid farewell to all your guests. I will inform you as soon as I find her,' Maharishi Matanga said authoritatively.

'The words of Sage cannot be false. If he has said that she was not in the Ashram, then she would not be. And if she could not die without doing the Lord's work, then so be it. I also didn't find any sign of her being devoured by wild animals in the forest', thought Shabar Sen. He returned home satisfied with the words of Maharishi. He apologized to all the guests, bidding them farewell and waited for some good news about his daughter.

## Shramana's Previous Life

Shramana began living with Sajag, an elderly forest-dwelling employee of the Ashram as his daughter. She spared no effort in serving the elderly man like a father. She addressed him as "Tau" (uncle). She used to rise early in the morning before Brahmamuhurta and completed her daily rituals, bathing in the Pampa Sarovar etc. After that, she would begin cleaning the hut and then preparing food for herself and her adoptive father. The elderly Sajag was extremely devoted to his duties. Before Sun rise, he would arrive at the cowshed, clean the cows and begin milking them. After preparing the morning meal, Shramana would take a snack and return to the cowshed to help Sajag. The adopted father and daughter would eat there and then return to their work. Gradually, Shramana developed a deep love for cows. She even considered one cow, 'Gauri', like her own mother. Whenever she had time, she would go to Gauri and talk to her for hours. It is not known how much Gauri understood, but she kept nodding. It had been six months since she left her father's house. Mangala continued to visit her friend Shramana at Sajag's hut every day regularly and shared whatever wisdom she had gathered from her father. One day when Shramana woke up in the morning, the sound of drums and cymbals coming from the forest caught her attention. Shramana asked Sajag, 'Uncle, is there any festival being celebrated in the forest?'

Sajag replied, "Yes, daughter, today is the day of worship of the forest God. Your father, Shabar Sen along with all his Bhil friends is praying the forest God under the guidance of the priest Singham, and these sounds are from the celebration of that festival.'

Hearing these words of Sajag, Shramana began to miss her parents and home. Old memories were revived. Tears welled up in her eyes but concealing her emotions, she ran to cow mother Gauri. She started crying profusely in front of cow Gauri, and look at Mother Cow, tears started flowing from her eyes too. She kept licking Shramana's face and wiping her tears with her tongue. When Shramana's heart felt a little lighter, Gauri started sharing past memories with mother cow.

‘Do you know mother cow, on this day all forest dwellers wear new clothes, play various instruments in our hands and sing glory of the forest God. We build a platform on a high place and install the idol of the forest God. At the end of the prayer, all the girls dance in a circle around the platform. I am a princess mother so, I used to be the leader of this dance. Once mother, a very pleasant incident happened. A man with a long beard, wearing saffron clothes who looked like a Sage, came into our celebration just when I and my group was about to start dancing. The priest ordered to stop the dancing immediately. I saw that the priest and my father prostrated before him and introduced him to all of us saying, ‘O forest dwellers, we are so blessed that the great Sage Sutikshan himself has come to bless us today.’

Hearing Sutikshan's name, all the forest dwellers bowed down to him from their places. Then, my father brought him to me. I could not exactly understand what Sutikshan Ji was muttering, but something like this that today, we are blessed to have seen the girl who will one day serve Shri Ram and will be His most beloved devotee. She will get him crowned in Ayodhya, etc, etc. He placed his hand on my head, blessed me and left. After that mother, we celebrated the forest festival with great joy and happiness.’

‘Mother, I asked my father in the evening, Father, who was this Sage Sutikshan whom you and the priest bowed down and gave such high respect and got me to bless him as well?

My father said, ‘O daughter, he is a great Sage Sutikshan disciple of Maharshi Agastya, a kind of Sage like our Sage Matanga. One morning when Sage Agastya was on his way to take a bath in the river, he heard a cry of a child. He immediately ran towards the cry and saw a small child lying alone and crying. He wondered who had left him there. He brought the child to his Ashram and placed him in the lap of his wife Gurumaa Lopamudra. Just then, the sage's daughter Rohini also emerged from the hut. Seeing the child's beauty and smiling face, she said, ‘Look, mother, what a beautiful toy’. We will keep him with us.’

Maharishi Agastya and Gurumaa Lopamudra's hearts also melted. They decided to raise the child. The child was very playful and did not know how to remain still. At his naming ceremony, Maharishi Agastya named him 'Sutikshan'. When he grew up, Maharishi Agastya made him his disciple. Sutikshan had no interest in vedic studies. Maharishi Agastya made many efforts to teach him the Vedas and Vedanta, but he remained a fool. He loved his Gurudev immensely and would remain devoted to his service. If Gurudev suffered even the slightest pain, he would stay awake the entire night in his service. Maharishi Agastya had a small black stone statue of Shaligram which he worshipped regularly every day. Once, Maharishi Agastya desired to go to pilgrimage. Guru Agastya said to Sutikshna, 'Son, I am going on a pilgrimage with your mother Lopamudra and sister Rohini. You will have to serve Shaligram Ji as I do everyday.'

Sutikshna was very naive. He had never properly worshipped or served Shaligram Ji. He asked Maharishi Agastya, 'Gurudev, what am I supposed to do?'

Then the Guru explained, 'look son, this is Shaligram Bhagwan Ji. Bathe Him daily and after apply sandalwood paste on His head, offer Him food, etc.'

After Gurudev Agastya departed for the pilgrimage, Sutikshna took over the care of the Ashram. He remained immersed in devotion to God worshipping Shaligram Ji daily. The Ashram had several jamun trees. The season for the jamuns arrived. Sutikshna felt a desire to eat the jamuns. He decided to pick them from the tree by striking the bunch of jamun on the tree by throwing a stone to make them fall. He could not find any stone. Then he thought that this Shaligram Ji is also made of stone. I can throw Shaligram Ji to break the bunch of jamun. Thinking so, He hit Shaligram with a bunch of jamun. The jamun fell down but Shaligram Ji fell into the nearby river. Sutikshan Ji waited for Shaligram to emerge from the river. When Shaligram Ji did not emerge for a long time, Sutikshan Ji said, 'O Lord, how long will you bathe? You will get cold. Come out now.'

Still, Shaligram Ji did not emerge. He jumped into the river to retrieve Shaligram Ji. He searched for Him extensively, but still could not find Him.

Sitting dejected on the river bank and wondering what to do next, a thought struck to him, 'This jamun is just like Shaligram Ji. Let me place this jamun on Shaligram Ji's throne and worship it.'

He continued doing this every day. Every morning, he would bring a new jamun, place it on Shaligram Ji's throne and offer flowers. He would perform Aarti and the next day flow it in the river and start his worship process next day with a new jamun. After completing pilgrimage journey, Maharishi Agastya returned to his Ashram with his family. Sitting on the throne, he started worshipping Shaligram Ji. As soon as Maharishi Agastya Ji bathed and wiped the Shaligram Ji, the pulp of the jamun got separated from the seed. Seeing this, he got very angry at Sutikshna Ji.

The, Sutikshna Ji said to Maharishi Agastya Ji very politely.

**पुनि पुनि चन्दन पुनि पुनि पानी |  
गल गए ठाकुर हम का जानी ||**

**Puni Puni Chandan Puni Puni Paanee.  
Gal Gae Thaakur Ham Kaa Jaanee.**

Again and again, you are bathing Shaligram Ji with water and putting Chandan on His forehead. He must have decomposed, how do I know?

Now the Sage became even more enraged. He angrily ordered him to leave the Ashram.

Accepting Guru's command, reluctantly, he left the Ashram after touching his feet and sat under a banyan tree. When the Sage's anger subsided, he went to Sutikshan and tried to persuade him to return to the Ashram. But Sutikshan Ji did not want to return to the Ashram without Shaligram Ji. He resolved that his Guru worshiped a stone, Shaligram; one day he would take Lord Hari in person with him to his Guru Agastya Ji. Maharishi Agastya had to yield to his insistence. Since then, he had been wandering the forests, meditating and praying the Lord, 'O Lord, please give me Darshan! I want to go to my Guru with You.'

'I have heard mother cow that Maharishi Agastya had blessed him that he would soon see God in human form. Is it not that amazing, Mother? Sutikshan Ji is a great devotee of God. That is why everyone respects him immensely. I do not know mother how but I do also have a feeling that if Sutikshan Ji can have Darshan of God, I can also.'

Mother cow nodded her head as if she was in agreement with Shramana.

Shramana said further, 'But mother, I find this story ridiculous. The Sage Sutikshan Ji can not be so stupid as to throw the revered Shaligram Ji on bunch of jamun to pluck them? Maharishi Agastya, like our Maharishi Matanga, possesses divine vision. He must have understood something fishy just by looking at it.'

Having said this, Shramana laughed heartily today. For the past six months, not only laughter but even smiles had vanished from her face. Mother cow also repeatedly nodded her head showing her happiness. Shramana was her daughter too, and which mother would not be happy to see her daughter so happy after so many years?

A year slowly passed while Shramana continued to live in Sajag's hut. One day she woke up a little earlier than her usual time. It was still dark outside. The wind was blowing very hard. Clouds had also gathered, possibly indicating rain. But life must go on as usual. After her daily routine, Shramana was ready to go to Pampa Sarovar for a bath. A strong wind had uprooted a nearby thorned bush which was lying on the path. Shramana could not see in the dark and she stepped on the thorned bush. The thorns pierced her foot, leaving her bleeding. Shramana groaned in pain. She immediately ran to her hut. She remembered that a few months ago when she had stumbled and fallen in the cowshed, Mangala had given her an ointment. Applying it on the wound would have brought her great relief. Upon reaching the hut, Shramana immediately applied that ointment on the wounds. Then, a thought sent a shiver through her body. In a short while, the great Sages of the Ashram and Maharishi Matanga himself would be leaving for Pampa Sarovar for a bath. These thorny bushes might hurt their feet? Immediately, she took a broom and swept the path.

Afterward, she bathed in the lake, returned to her hut and resumed her daily routine.

This became a daily routine for the Shramana. Before bathing in the lake, she would sweep the path with her broom, then bathe again and resume her daily routine. The practice of ensuring a clean path daily could not escape Maharishi Matanga's keen eyes. Who was the one who cleaned the path to the lake every day before dawn? He was fully aware of the nature and daily routine of every Ashram resident. He was certain that this task was not performed by any Ashram resident. Out of curiosity, one day he woke up early and tried to find out who was cleaning the path. Maharishi Matanga sat hidden under a tree on the way to Pampa Lake. After a while, he saw a shadow sweeping the path. Maharishi Matanga immediately went to that shadow and said, 'Who are you who tries to keep this path clean every day?'

Shramana panicked. Would the sage become angry? She prostrated herself at his feet and said, 'Lord, my name is Shramana. One day, while walking on this path, I saw a bush full of thorns lying on the path. I swept that path and now onwards I sweep path every day so that these thorns do not prick the Lord and the Ashram residents. If I have committed any sin, please forgive me, Lord.'

There were tears in the eyes of Shramana.

'Shramana? Are you the daughter of the Bhil chieftain Shabar? the Sage asked in surprise.

'Yes, Lord. My father wanted to marry me off. That would have been appropriate Lord, but because of my marriage many animals would have been killed. He was going to sacrifice innocent animals to the forest deity to appease Him and then eat them. Lord, Mangala had told me that animal killing is a sin. Therefore, I ran away from there'.

Shramana spoke these words to the Sage and was very frightened.

‘You are very blessed daughter Shramana. Why should not the beloved daughter of Lord Hari have such Vaishnava thoughts? Why did you not come to me in the Ashram, daughter? Where have you been wandering all these days?’.

The Maharishi's eyes welled up with tears.

‘Lord, how could I, a Bhil daughter dare to come to the Ashram? O Maharishi, Sajag uncle loved me like his own daughter. I have been staying in his hut ever since.’

‘Sajag, our cowshed protector! You lived so close to me yet I could not find you? Anyway. That may be the Lord wishes. Now come with me to the Ashram and tell me without hesitation what you want to do in life,’ Maharishi spoke in sweet and loving words.

‘Lord, please forgive my audacity. I want to study the Vedas and Vedanta like Mangala,’ Shramana said.

‘That is all. Sure, I will accept you as my disciple. I will personally impart the knowledge of Brahman to you. But there is one condition,’ Maharishi Matanga said.

Maharishi Matanga continued, ‘I have promised your father that whenever I will find you, I will inform him and hand you over to him. I am bound by my promise, daughter. I will have to call your father and hand you over to him. But I will try to convince him to allow you to receive education. Have faith in me daughter. God will do everything right.’

Maharishi brought Shramana to the Ashram then. He told the Ashram residents about Shramana's selfless act. Everyone exclaimed, ‘Thank you, thank you.’

Maharishi then sent an Ashram resident to the Bhil chieftain Shabar Sen with the good news that Shramana had been found, alive and well. He should come and meet her at the Ashram immediately.

As soon as Shabar Sen got the news of his daughter being found, he felt as if a full moon had appeared from the clouds of the night. Sabar Sen along with his wife immediately ran towards Maharshi Matang's Ashram. Seeing their daughter in front of them in Ashram, both the husband and wife became engrossed in the happiness of seeing their daughter forgetting their sorrow. It was a scene as if after a dark night there was a glow like the light of the Sun in the morning. Their eyes filled with tears. At that time, a slow cool wind was blowing. The birds had come out of their nests and were singing among themselves. The soft leaves of the bushes were swaying in the wind making the environment very pleasant. Shramana's mother immediately reached close to her daughter and took her in her lap and hugged her to her heart. She started kissing her forehead again and again just as a newly born cow licks its calf or paupera hug each other after getting the lost wealth. Then, she started cursing her daughter with loving words for leaving her alone like this. When everyone's hearts were filled with peace and happiness due to the union of father, mother and daughter, then Maharishi Matang spoke sweetly, 'Dear Shabar Sen, keeping my promise, I have immediately conveyed to you the message of finding your daughter. According to the scriptures, the father has sole authority over an unmarried daughter. Therefore, now you will definitely play a very important role in shaping the future of your daughter. Your daughter has expressed her views clearly to me. Like the Aryan girls, she wants to attain Brahma-gyan by getting the education of Vedas and Vedants. I have also given her permission to study and have promised her to make my disciple. But this is only possible with your permission. So, you have to decide now how you may see your daughter's future? To marry her and put her in the bondage of household life or to give her an opportunity to attain the knowledge of Brahma. Before you take any decision, I will definitely give you a hint. Your daughter was born for the work of Shri Hari, probably not to get married and get tied to family life. Let me tell you the story of her previous birth.

Maharshi Matang continued, 'In her previous life, your daughter was Malini, the daughter of Gandharva emperor Chitrakavacha. She was married to a sage Vitihotra. Rishi Vitihotra was always engrossed in meditation. He had no time to spend with his wife and family in his Ashram.

The princess soon became bored with this type of recluse life. She fell in love with a Nishad Kalmash. When Sage Vitihotra came to know about this, he became very angry and condemned Malini for this unethical act and cursed her, 'O Gandharva's daughter Malini, you have behaved like a lowly woman, hence in the next life you will be born in the house of a laborer. When Kalmash heard of this curse, he was filled with guilt due to his misdeed and committed suicide by drowning in the river. This curse shook Malini's heart. She also started feeling extremely guilty about her misdeed. A continuous stream of tears started flowing from her eyes. She fell at the feet of Rishivar Vitihotra and started apologizing. You know usually the Sage's hearts are very soft for even common people, after all Malini was his wife. Sage Vitihotra was moved and said, 'Dear, I cannot remove the curse but I can definitely give you a mantra to please Lord Vishnu. Perform penance by chanting that mantra with a pure heart. Surely Lord Vishnu will forgive you.

**मङ्गलम् भगवान् विष्णुः, मङ्गलम् गरुणध्वजः ।**

**मङ्गलम् पुण्डरी काक्ष, मङ्गलाय तनो हरिः ॥**

**Nangalam Bhagwan Vishnuh, Mangalam Garunadhvajah.  
Mangalam Pundari Kakshah, Mangalaya Tano Harih.**

Maharshi Matang continued, 'Then Malini, taking the blessings of her husband Sage Vitihotra started trying to please Lord Vishnu by chanting this simple mantra. After many years of her penance, a voice came from the sky, 'O daughter Malini, your husband Rishivar Vitihotra had already forgiven you, I also forgive you. You leave your penance now and go back to your husband's Ashram. He will definitely accept you. By serving your husband and his disciples, dedicate the rest of your life to social service and devotion to God. Your next birth will definitely be in the house of a laborer but with My blessings, you will attain the knowledge of Brahma and will spend your life in My service. When I will descend in Treta Yuga to destroy the demons on earth, you will get My darshan. After listening to the voice from sky, Malini bowed to the Lord in her heart and then returned to the Ashram of her husband Rishi Vitihotra. Rishivar had also heard this voice from the sky. He gave a grand welcome to his wife on her return to

the Ashram and both of them spent the rest of their lives happily doing social service and worshipping God. When the time came, he left his earthly body. Rishi Vitihotra attained salvation and went to Saket Dham to live with the Lord. However, due to that curse, poor Malini had to be reborn in the house of a laborer on earth. That laborer is none other than you Shabar Sen and that Malini is none other than Shramana. Whatever decision you take after knowing the history of this previous life of your daughter and the objective of Shramana's life, we will respect that, Shabar Sen.'

'Trahi Maam, Trahi Maam, protect me, protect me Maharishi. Forgive us, the ignorant people,' saying this, both of them, Bhil Sardar Shabar Sen and his wife prostrated themselves to the holy feet of Maharishi.

Maharishi Msatang himself picked up Shabar Sen and hugged him.

Shabar Sen politely with folded hands said, 'My daughter is your daughter Maharishi. I dedicate her to you. It is very fortunate for this Bhil community that a daughter of this community will attain the knowledge of Brahma. Lord, whatever you command will happen'.

Then the Maharishi blessed them and did bid farewell. He allowed them to come to Ashram at their Will to meet their daughter whenever they wanted.

Maharishi Matang formally accepted Shramana as his disciple then. He asked her to take a holy bath in Pampa Sarovar and then enter into the Ashram. Her entry into the Ashram was made with chanting of mantras and thus, she became a member of the Ashram. The friendship between Mangala and Shramana remained an example to the entire Ashram. Mangala devoted her entire attention to learning Ayurvedic knowledge and Shramana studied Vedas and Vedantas. As the time passed, Mangala was sent to Maharishi Bhardwaj's Ashram Prayagraj to get expertise in Ayurveda and Shramana continued to get the education of Vedas and Vedanta under the instructions of Matang Rishi Ji and eventually was decorated with the title of Acharya.

## Naming Shabari

As per the instructions of Maharishi Shrangi in Maharishi Bhardwaj's Ashram, Vice Chancellor Kurtaki started spending more and more time with Mangala. By minutely studying Shramana's nature, her walking, speaking and other practical movement methods, she started trying to become a replica of Shramana. She started making tireless efforts to control the vocabulary, dictionary and pronunciation of the language of the forest dwellers. Along with applying Ayurveda herbal pastes, she started to darken her skin complexion by practicing meditation in the hot afternoon Sun all day long. Everyone in the Ashram understood that the Vice-Chancellor was engrossed in some special penance, hence no one dared to disturb her peace. Three months did pass and now Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki had become a complete embodiment of Shramana. Mangala's Ayurvedic specialist education had also been completed. Therefore, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki organized the convocation ceremony with the permission of Maharishi Bhardwaj and decorated Mangala with the title of Acharya. It was decided then that Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki and Acharya Mangala with Maharishi Shrangi would soon leave for Maharishi Matang's Ashram in Aranyvan. As per the instructions of Maharishi Bhardwaj, Acharya Pandurang reached Maharishi Matang's Ashram in Aranyavan and secretly informed him about Maharishi Shrangi's plan. Maharishi Matang was waiting for this very moment. He made Acharya Shramana aware of the entire situation and ordered her to be ready for transfer. Acharya Shramana had been waiting for this moment ever since Maharishi Matang had informed her about her previous birth. She had heard a lot about Maharishi Bhardwaj, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki and the Gurukul in Prayag. She got goosebumps thinking that soon she would see Goddess like Kurtaki and God like Maharishi Bhardwaj. Keeping in mind the gratitude of Gurudev Maharishi Matang, she repeatedly bowed her head at the feet of Maharishi Matang and received blessings from him.

Maharishi Matang thought that if Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki came to the Ashram with Maharishi Shrangi straight, then it would be impossible to keep the secrecy of this plan. It was necessary for him to meet with Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki and Maharishi Shrangi at a secluded place with

Acharya Shramana. When Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki was fully ready to assume the role of Acharya Shramana after staying in this deserted place for a few days, then Maharishi Matang would hand over Acharya Shramana to Maharishi Shrang and he will bring Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki to his Ashram in the disguise of Acharya Shramana. After much consideration, he decided that the most suitable place for this would be the hut of Rishivar Sutikshan which was situated on the other side bank of Pampa Sarovar. Ever since Rishivar Sutikshan Ji had left the Ashram of his Gurudev Maharishi Agastya, he had been living alone in a small hut in this deserted place waiting for Lord Shri Ram to give Darshan to him so, he can take Him to the Ashram of Gurudev Agastya. Due to the angry nature of Rishivar Sutikshan, forest dweller or anyone else for that matter was afraid to wander near his hut. As soon as this idea came in the mind of Maharshi Matang, he commenced its implementation.

First of all the next day, Maharishi Matang introduced Acharya Pandurang to all the Ashram residents and said, 'Acharya Pandurang is the disciple of my very dear friend Maharishi Bhardwaj. He is heartily welcomed in this Ashram. As per his wish, I am going to take him on a forest tour. After showing him the main places of the forest, I will return in a few days and then Acharya Pandurang will leave for Prayag.'

Some Ashram residents tried to get permission to accompany Maharishi Matang to make proper arrangements for the safety of Maharishi and Acharya Pandurang and their food etc., but Maharishi Matang did not accept it. As per the plan, Maharishi Matang and Acharya Pandurang headed towards the hut of Rishi Sutikshan. After a few hours of journey, Maharishi Matang and Acharya Pandurang reached near the hut of Rishi Sutikshan Ji. Rishivar Sutikshan Ji saw Maharishi Matang coming towards his hut from a distance and immediately he ran to pay obeisance to him. He brought both of them to his hut with respect. After worshipping Maharshi Matang, he offered fruits for food.

After taking some rest, Maharishi Matang informed the complete plan to Rishi Sutikshan. Thinking that the feet of Maharishi Shrang were also going to fall on his hut, Rishi Sutikshan became overjoyed and for this

favor he repeatedly bowed his head at the feet of Maharishi Matang and pay his obeisances to him.

After spending a few days in the hut of Sage Sutikshan, Maharishi Matang returned to his Ashram with Acharya Pandurang. Acharya Pandurang then asked his permission to take leave. After getting blessings from Maharshi, he left for Prayag.

On reaching Prayag, he bowed his head at the feet of his Gurudev Maharishi Bhardwaj, Maharishi Shrangi and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki and gave a detailed description of the incidents that happened in Maharishi Matang's Ashram.

After taking permission from Maharishi Bhardwaj, Maharishi Shrangi, Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki and Acharya Mangala then proceeded to Aranyvan to the hut of Rishi Sutikshan Ji.

After a few days' journey, the group of three reached at the hut of Sage Sutikshan. After rest of few days, Acharya Mangala decided to go to Maharishi Matang's Ashram to inform him about the arrival of Maharishi Shrangi and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki at the hut of Rishi Sutikshan.

As soon as Acharya Mangala reached the gate of Maharishi Matang's Ashram, an Ashram resident immediately recognized her, bowed to her and ran towards the Ashram shouting, 'Devi Mangala has come, Devi Mangala has come.'

Hearing this voice, Acharya Shramana first ran barefoot towards the Ashram to meet her friend Mangala. She embraced her friend. Tears continued to flow from the eyes of both the friends. Then she heard the sweet words of Acharya Anant Dev from behind, 'Welcome daughter. Our eyes became blessed seeing you.'

Then Mangala hugged her father and cried a lot. After meeting her father, she went to Maharishi Matang's hut, paid obeisance to him, told him everything through signals and then ran to her hut to meet her mother. It was as if mother got the whole world. Both mother and daughter hugged

each other for a long time and kept shedding tears of love. Acharya Shramana realized that now the time was near when she had to bid farewell to Maharishi Matang's Ashram and leave for Maharishi Bhardwaj's Gurukul Prayag. With a strong desire to meet her parents for the last time, she went to Maharishi Matang for permission. She paid obeisance to him and sat near him. Maharishi Matang understood that Shramana wanted to meet her parents. After blessing her, he immediately gave permission to her to go and meet her parents.

On getting permission from Maharshi Matang, Acharya Shramana reached the house of her father Shabar Sen. The daughter was now an Arya Guru and an Acharya, so according to the customs of Aryan tradition, he tried to bow down to pay his obeisance and respect, Shramana quickly caught hold of her father and hugged him. Then, she met her mother with great love. After looking at both of them with love, her tears were not stopping. Bhil Sardar Shabar Sen and his wife could not understand why their daughter was crying so much. It was a very happy day for them that their Aryan daughter had come to meet them at their home. Ever since Maharishi Matang had honored their daughter with the title of Acharya, their respect had been touching the sky in their community.

Sabar Sen said to his daughter, 'O Daughter, we are always with you. Whenever you feel like, you can come to meet us we will come to the Ashram. Do not cry.'

After bidding farewell to her parents, Acharya Shramana returned to the Ashram of Maharishi Matang and started waiting for the Guru's order to go to the hut of Rishi Sutikshan. While there was sadness in the heart of being separated from the parents and all the Ashram residents, the mind was also filled with happiness at the thought of being helpful in the Lord's work and to have the darshan of Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki and being guided in the future by Maharishi Bhardwaj.

That evening, Maharishi Matang called both Acharya Shramana and Acharya Mangala to his hut. Maharishi Matang said, 'Maharishi Shrangi and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki have been waiting for us at the hut of Rishi

Sutikshan for some days. It is not appropriate to make them wait any longer. Therefore, I propose that the next morning we proceed towards the hut of Rishi Sutikshan.'

Both the Acharyas agreed and started preparing to go to the hut of Rishi Sutikshan next day. In the morning, Maharishi Matang told the Ashram residents about his decision to go to the forest with Acharya Shramana and Acharya Mangala for some important work. Thus, the group of three headed towards the hut of Rishi Sutikshan. Within a few hours, the group of three, Maharishi Matang, Acharya Mangala and Acharya Shramana, reached the hut of Rishi Sutikshan. According to the etiquette of Aryan clan, Maharishi Matang and Maharishi Shrangi met each other by embracing. Acharya Shramana and Acharya Mangala touched the feet of Maharishi Shrangi and Rishi Sutikshan Ji. Acharya Shramana was surprised to see Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki. She had never imagined in her dreams that Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki would adapt to her like this.

Acharya Shramana greeted the Vice-Chancellor again and again and Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki accepted her greetings with love. Acharya Shramana was most surprised when the Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki started talking to her in the forest language in her own accent.

They commenced talking each other and discussed further plan. The moment of farewell had come which everyone was waiting for. Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki placed her blessing hand on the head of Acharya Shramana and promised that she would take full care of her parents like herself and would keep sending the details of their welfare to Prayag Gurukul from time to time. Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki was now ready to take place of Acharya Shramana and Acharya Mangala of Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki. They left for their respective Ashrams. Only a limited number of people knew about this transfer.

Maharishi Matang returned to his Ashram with Acharya Shramana (Vice-Chancellor Kurtaki) and Acharya Mangala. Due to being tired that day, everyone was ordered to take rest. The next morning, he sent a disciple and invited Shabar Sen and organized a meeting with all the Ashram residents.

Maharishi Matang said. 'Dear friends, Acharya Shramana's education is now complete and she wishes to establish her own independent Ashram among his Bhil community. My blessings are with her. Yes, I have definitely told her that by establishing an Ashram among the Bhil community and living among them, some Aryans may be dissatisfied and may not give her the respect that she is getting now. But she is my disciple and a disciple is equal to a daughter. Therefore, she can come to my Ashram anytime without any hesitation. My love for her will never diminish. If anyone has any objection to this then he/ she should express his/her views now'.

The public meeting echoed with slogans of 'That is great'. Shabar Sen could not believe his ears that his daughter now wanted to come and live among them. With tears in his eyes, he hugged her daughter and said, 'Daughter, in our old age you have cared for your parents. God must be very happy with you and must be blessing you from the sky. Daughter, you are welcome.'

'Father, I have taken a vow of celibacy so, I cannot stay at home with the family. Please find a clean and safe place for me to set up my Ashram and get few huts built there. I will settle there and start serving you and the entire Bhil community', said Shramana.

'Sure daughter, please give me one week's time. You will get your Ashram established', said Shabar Sen.

After turning towards the Maharishi and paying his respects at his feet from a distance, Shabar Sen was about to leave when Maharishi Matang spoke again, 'Shabar Sen and Ashram residents, now that Shramana is going to establish her new independent Ashram, I rename her 'Shabari', the protector of the Shabar community. Shabari means 'Yogasini' in Sanskrit. She is Yogasini for the Aryans and Shabari for the forest dwellers. Thgus, Shramana got her new name 'Shabari' and after this she was addressed by this name only.

## **Shabri's new ashram**

After Shabar Sen left, Maharishi Matang called Acharya Shabari and Acharya Mangala to his room and secret consultations started taking place between them. Acharya Shabari was an expert in the intelligence system so, it did not take long for her to make her plan.

She said, 'Great Maharshi, it is necessary to take the forest dwellers into our confidence first. For this, let us make the plan to unite the civilization of two communities. For this task, friendship with the forest God priest Singham is necessary and we must convince him in every way that establishing our Ashram among Bhil community will not affect his priesthood and he will be acceptable to the forest community as well as to me as respected priest.'

With permission of Maharshi Matang, Acharya Shabari herself decided to go to the residence of Priest Singham to meet him the next morning. It was also decided that after Acharya Shabari had established her new Ashram, Acharya Mangala would maintain contact between the Ashram of Maharshi Matang and Ashram of Acharya Shabari. Acharya Mangala was an expert in Ayurveda science, hence in the new Ashram of Acharya Shabari, a hut would be converted into a dispensary where Acharya Mangala would run the clinic regularly to serve the forest dwellers. All the Ashram residents and forest dwellers knew very well that Acharya Mangala was a close friend of Acharya Shabari, hence no one had any possibility of any kind of doubt about Acharya Mangala meeting Acharya Shabari regularly and running a hospital there. To convey the secret news from the Ashram to the Ayodhya administration, a plan was made to assign this task to Maharishi Matang's disciple Acharya Jagadmurthy, who was also a weapons expert in Maharishi Matang's Ashram and for many years teaching this science to disciples.

Maharishi Matang immediately invited Acharya Jagadmurthy through a disciple to participate in the secret consultation. Acharya Jagadmurthy immediately reached Maharishi's hut. After touching Maharishi's feet, he started waiting for Maharishi's orders. Maharishi then gave then the real

introduction of Acharya Shabari. Knowing that Acharya Shabari was none other than Acharya Guru Kurtaki, he immediately wanted to touch the feet of Acharya Shabari but Acharya Shabari refused with a gesture. In no way should anyone find out the real identity of Acharya Shabari. Thereafter Maharishi asked Acharya Jagadmurthy if he was willing to participate in this auspicious work. Acharya Jagadmurthy became emotional. Expressing his gratitude to Maharishi and Acharya Shabari, he spoke words of love, 'I am blessed Maharishi and Acharya Shabari Ji that you chose me for such an important work. I promise you that I will implement this work completely to the best of my talent and will keep this plan secret to myself only understanding its confidential importance.'

Maharishi Matanga instructed Acharya Jagadmurti to inform the administrative officer of Ayodhya Shri Anantdev at the fort in Hampi that Acharya Shabari had assumed her position and duties. He should be ready to provide all financial, military and other necessary assistance to Acharya Shabari should she require.

After receiving instructions from Maharishi Matang and following his orders, everyone departed for their respective huts to rest. Acharya Shabari and Acharya Mangala went to meet Pujari Singham at his residence next morning. Acharya Shabari knew that Sardar Shabara Sen and Pujari Singham were of the same age group and had been close friends since childhood. Acharya Shramana always addressed him as 'Kaka' (uncle) so, upon arriving at the residence of priest Singham, Acharya Shabari touched priest Singham's feet and embraced him, calling him Kaka. Pujari Singham could not imagine that Acharya Shabari who was now the Guru of the Aryans would even come close to him, but she was touching his feet. Tears welled up in his eyes.

He said emotionally, 'Daughter, your arrival has sanctified my hut. I am extremely happy to know that you have not forgotten your uncle. May the forest Gods always be pleased with you and may your fame grow daily.'

He immediately called out to his wife, Look, fortunate one, who has come?'

The priestess looked at Acharya Shabari with astonished eyes. Acharya Shabari immediately stepped forward and touched her feet. It was as if two long-lost families meet again after a long time with an emotional reunion. Aunt immediately arranged for refreshments for everyone.

Then, Acharya Shabari said, 'Uncle, I have now decided to leave the Ashram of Maharshi Matang to set up my own Ashram. I want to serve my community merging with the civilization of my father and ancestors. I have requested my father to build me a hut in the midst of society. Since I have taken the vow of Brahmacharini, I cannot remain a householder. My father has embarked on this task. Since you are the respected priest of the forest dwellers, your permission is necessary to carry this out. I have come to seek your permission. Furthermore, I have one more request. I am unaware of the rules and regulations of worshipping the forest God. Will you accept me as your disciple and teach me this so that I can serve the community with full ceremonial rituals?'

Priest Singham was moved on this request emotionally and said, 'Daughter, as the daughter of the Bhil chieftain Shabar Sen, it is your right to learn the rituals of worshipping the forest God. I will be delighted to teach you this. You have lightened my burden. I am growing old now. I do not know when death will strike. I have been pondering for a long time about to whom I should pass on this tradition. But I could not find a suitable man or woman in our community. Now I am confident that I will be able to impart this knowledge to a capable and worthy person.'

Having thus gained the confidence of priest Singham, receiving his blessings for the establishment of the Ashram, and his promise to teach her the method of praying the forest deity, Acharya Shabari and Acharya Mangala returned to the Ashram. A week later, Shabara Sen returned to Sage Matanga's Ashram with some companions. They met with the Maharishi and Acharya Shabari to inform them of the arrangements for their new residence. A beautiful Ashram had been constructed on the banks of Pampa Sarovar after clearing the forest. Ten huts had been constructed in the new Ashram, of which a beautiful hut equipped with all the amenities had been specially built for Acharya Shabari near the lake shore.

Embracing her father Shabara Sen with all her heart, Acharya Shabari took Maharishi Matanga's permission and departed for her new Ashram. The beauty of the hut site captivated her. The clear water, the bushes laden with fragrant, colorful flowers and the tall trees along the lake captivated her. For a while, Acharya Shabari lost herself in meditation. When she was awakened, she inspected her Ashram. She took up residence in a hut overlooking Pampa Sarovar. The remaining huts were equipped with medical facilities and suitable accommodation for her disciples. Under the guidance of priest Singham, preparations for a grand festival to pray and appease the forest God soon began at Acharya Shabari's Ashram. When the festival day arrived, the idol of the forest God was installed on a high platform and a fire was lit. The atmosphere became full of music with the sound of drums and cymbals. The prayer was sung in the language of the forest dwellers. The festival also reflected a certain Aryan culture with the offering of cow ghee. Shabara Sen had already banned the practice of sacrifice, so the festival was to the Yajñ Veda. The festival was celebrated without any animal sacrifice. After the prayer was concluded, the Bhil girls danced around the Yajñ Veda. Acharya Shabari also participated in this dance ceremony with great enthusiasm. Acharya Kurtaki, the vice-chancellor of Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram, who had probably not smiled in a long time, let alone laughing was lost in the joy of a child. She remembered her childhood in Ladakh when she would so joyfully chase butterflies in the Himalayan lakes.

At the conclusion of the festival, everyone warmly welcomed Acharya Shabari. Everyone returned to their homes offering their best wishes after a grand feast. Acharya Shabari had the opportunity to meet and befriend with all the prominent figures of the Bhil community during this festival. Exhausted after the enthusiastic day, Acharya Shabari went to her room to sleep as the night arrived.

She began planning for the next day lying on the bed. She was planning to befriend with Marichi, the chief spy of the demons. Thinking on the plan, she fell asleep.

On the other side, Maharishi Shringi accompanied with Acharya Shramana arrived at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram in Prayagraj. The

astonishing beauty of the Ashram and the murmuring sound of the sacred streams of Mother Ganga captivated Acharya Shramana's heart. Maharishi Bharadwaj with his wife Sushila personally came to welcome them at the Ashram's gate. Immediately after disembarking from the chariot, Acharya Shramana touched the feet of Maharishi Bharadwaj and Gurumaa Sushila and received their blessings. Afterward, the two Maharishis, Maharishi Bharadwaj and Maharishi Shringi, embraced each other. Maharishi Shringi signalled Maharishi Bharadwaj to inform him of the successful mission. Maharishi Bharadwaj then led Maharishi Shringi to the special guest room and requested him to bathe in the Ganges River, have a meal and take rest.

Gurumaa Sushila took Acharya Shramana to her hut. Maharishi Bharadwaj called a meeting of the heads of all the departments of the Gurukul next morning. Addressing them Maharishi Bhardwaj said, "Dear Acharyas, Vice-Chancellor Acharya Kurtaki has requested that she wishes to devote more of her time to spiritual practice and the study of the Vedas and Vedanta and she wishes to resign from the position of Vice-Chancellor. After discussions with Maharishi Shringi and Maharishi Vashishtha, I have decided to respect her decision. Therefore, I am relieving Acharya Guru Kurtaki from position of Vice-Chancellor. I have established a special department for her, the 'Bhakti Veda Vedanta Adhyayan Shastra Vibhag'," and have requested her to assume the chairmanship of this department which she has accepted. Considering her talent, ability, devotion, and knowledge, we three Maharishis, myself, Maharishi Shringi, and Maharishi Vashishtha, have decided to confer the title of Maharishi upon her. From today onwards, Acharya Guru Kurtaki will be addressed as 'Maharishi Kurtaki'. It is our duty to ensure that there are no obstacles in her spiritual practices. Acharya Satananda, son of Maharishi Gautam has completed his education at the Ashram of Brahmarishi Vishwamitra and is planning to go to Janakpur to serve Maharaj Janak and Maharishi Yagyavalkya. I had requested Brahmaputra Maharshi Yagyavalkya to allow Acharya Satanand Ji to be sent to Prayagraj for a few years to take over the responsibilities of the Vice Chancellor of our Gurukul. I am very pleased to inform all of you that he has agreed. I request all of you to give Acharya Satanand Ji a grand

welcome upon his arrival and assist him in La thgw ways tgo run this Gurukul as per his instructions.'

'Thank you, thank you, great Maharshi Bhardwaj. We are fortunate that Acharya Satanand, son of Maharshi Gautam will guide us. Our humble greetings to Maharshi Kurtaki', everyone unanimously welcomed these words of Maharshi Bharadwaj with thunderous applause.

## Friendship of Acharya Shabri with Marichi

Marichi, son of Suketu Yaksha's daughter Tadka and Sunda, represented Ravana the king of Lanka and administered a portion of the Aranya forest conquered by Ravana. His capital Abhyaranya was a beautiful city located within the Aranya forest only a few miles away from Acharya Shabari's Ashram. He was also a distant relative of Ravana, the king of Lanka. Impressed by his valor and skill in deceit, the king of Lanka after conquering a portion of the Aranya forest in a battle with a tribal community, appointed Marichi as its ruler. He was responsible for ensuring that the other rulers of the Aranya forest and the tribal Bhil community remained under control and did not conspire against Ravana, the king of Lanka. Any attempt to raise a voice against Ravana was immediately suppressed. He was a highly skilled spy. The kingdom of Ayodhya had no direct objection to this, but his followers would enter the Ashrams of Sages and monks protected by the kingdom of Ayodhya and were causing disturbances. Therefore, it was extremely important for the kingdom of Ayodhya to keep an eye on him and his followers.

Marichi, though had been a troublemaker since childhood but he was not of demonic nature. With his mischief, he would cause unnecessary trouble to the Sages and monks. Distressed by this, one day Maharishi Agastya addressed him as a 'person of unrighteous nature'. Deeply saddened by this address, he went to Maharishi Pulastya, the father of Ravana, hoping to be freed from the curse. Maharishi Pulastya was moved by his devotional request and sent him back saying, O son, though relief from the curse is impossible, but I grant you the boon of attaining salvation through Lord Vishnu himself.'

Marichi, the representative of Ravana and administrator of this part of Aranyvan, had immense faith in the Aryan religion and institution. He desired an Aryan Acharya as his spiritual Guru, but no Aryan Guru would accept Marichi as his disciple who was cursed by Maharishi Agastya. Angered by their refusal, he had even murdered several Aryan Acharyas. Taking advantage of this desire, Acharya Shabari began plotting to befriend with him.

Acharya Shabari sent one of her disciples to Marichi's capital Abyaranya the next morning to request an appointment. By then, Marichi had also received news from his spies that Acharya Shramana had abandoned Maharishi Matanga's Ashram and established her own independent Ashram and given a title of 'Acharya Shabari'. He too was eager to meet Acharya Shabari to learn the reason of leaving Maharishi Matanga's Ashram and establishing her own independent Ashram. Therefore, upon receiving the news that Acharya Shabari wished to meet him, he personally went to Acharya Shabari's Ashram.

Seeing Marichi at her Ashram, Acharya Shabari greeted him with a grand welcome. She requested him to take bath in the sacred Pampa Sarovar and to have refreshment with her. After having breakfast, both, the administrator Marichi and Acharya Shabari began a conversation. Acharya Shabari explained her desire to establish her own independent Ashram so that she could serve her community of the forest dwellers which was not possible while living in the Aryan Ashram. She also offered these services to Marichi and his followers and expressed her desire to take the Ashram under his blessings and protection. Acharya Shabari also mentioned that Acharya Mangala, her close friend and expert in Ayurveda had supported her intention to open a hospital at her Ashram and would soon open one. Her hospital could also benefit Marichi's community.

It was as if Marichi had achieved all his desired results. His dream had come true to be accepted into the Aryan clan through Acharya Shabari. Though he was surprised that she had requested her protection, but was very happy inside to receive that request.

Marichi said, 'Daughter, I have never had any conflict with your father Shabar Sen. I have always respected him like my elder brother. His daughter Acharya Shabari is now seeking my protection; this is a privilege to me. I accept it wholeheartedly. I am very pleased that you accept to be my spiritual Guru and also my community and guide all of us through proper Aryan rituals.'

'Of course, uUncle Marichi? I have received my education solely for the upliftment of the Bhil community and all other communities,' Acharya Shabari said happily.

Having thus made friendship with Acharya Shabari and making her the spiritual Guru of his clan, Marichi returned to his capital. After reaching at capital, he duly announced this message to his community.

Time passed on. Acharya Mangala now resided permanently in Acharya Shabari's Ashram. Under the guidance of Acharya Shabari and Acharya Mangala, more than ten hospitals were gradually opened throughout the Arynya forest. There was never a shortage of financial support for the construction and management of these hospitals. Ample funds began to flow in from Ayodhya and Marichi's state. Through these hospitals and with the spiritual connection between Acharya Shabari and Marichi, Acharya Shabari's intelligence network became extremely robust. Every news about Marichi and his associates reached Acharya Shabari and Acharya Mangala. Acharya Mangala relayed each news to Acharya Jagadmurti at Maharishi Matanga's Ashram. The Ayodhya army was now prepared to face any resistance. Gradually, the demon-like people began to be destroyed. Since this work was carried out gradually under a well-planned scheme, Marichi or his associates remained completely unaware of it. Thirteen years passed like this. Now there was complete peace in the forest. One day, Marichi suddenly arrived at Acharya Shabari's Ashram. His visit was sudden and kept secret so, Acharya Shabari had no idea about it. Marichi seemed a little worried. Acharya Shabari greeted him, offered him some refreshments and politely asked, "Uncle Marichi, why did you bother to come here? You could have sent me a message and I would have personally attended your court.'

Marichi said reluctantly, 'Daughter, mother Tadka has sent a message from the Sundar forest. She has called me urgently. Perhaps you may not know that my mother Tadka lives in the Sundar forest with my younger brother Subahu. As I learned from the letter, Subahu, after drinking alcohol with some of his friends caused extensive damage to Maharishi Vishwamitra's Ashram. Maharishi Vishwamitra killed his companions on the spot but my brother somehow escaped and reached our mother in

Sundar forest. In anger, Mother attacked Maharishi Vishwamitra's Ashram with a huge army accompanied by Subahu. In their anger, the foolish ones did not even realize that Maharishi Vishwamitra had been given divine weapons by Brahma himself. Who could defeat him? Maharishi Vishwamitra killed entire army of my mother and brother Subahu. But my mother and Subahu survived because of Brahma's boon that only Lord Hari could kill them. Maharishi Vishwamitra has now gone to Ayodhya to take Ram, son of Emperor Dasharatha to kill my mother and Subahu. My mother wants my assistance to kill Ram. I sent this message to Maharishi Pulastya for his instructions. He has conveyed to me that prince Ram, son of Emperor Dasharatha is none other than the incarnation of Lord Vishnu Himself and therefore, I should not wage war against Him. Before I could convince her not to wage war against Ram, my mother sent the news of enmity with Maharishi Vishwamitra to the King of Lanka, requesting him to immediately order me to go to the Sundar forest to execute Maharishi Vishwamitra and the prince Ram who is accompanying him. The King of Lanka saddened by this destruction of Subahu's army, has ordered me to immediately proceed to the Sundar forest with a large army and challenge Maharishi Vishwamitra and prince Ram to battle. I know that doing so is like facing death but I am helpless. I must leave soon. I have come to you personally to convey this message. This may be our last meeting.

Acharya Shabari said in a calm voice, "Uncle Marichi, from what I have heard about Lord Hari, He is extremely kind and understands the feelings of the heart. Your heart is against fighting Him. He must surely know this. You may go. I am confident that your life will not be harmed."

'May your words come true, daughter. If that happens, then we will meet again,' Marichi left saying this.

Taking his entire army, Marichi then departed for the Sundar forest. Upon reaching the Sundar forest, he attempted to pacify mother Tadka and his brother Subahu. He also conveyed Maharishi Pulastya's message. However, mother Tadka and Subahu could think of nothing but revenge against Maharishi Vishwamitra. All Marichi's attempts of pacification failed and war seemed inevitable. The next day, Marichi, accompanied by his army, mother Tadka and Subahu arrived at Maharishi Vishwamitra's

Ashram for battle. He saw there two extremely handsome Kshatriya princes standing guard to protect Maharishi Vishwamitra's Ashram.

A thought arose in his mind that he cannot kill these so handsome princes. These princes are certainly not worthy of being killed. While he was contemplating this, mother Tadka and Subahu uttered the word "Attack" from behind and ordered their army to attack these two princes. A fierce battle ensued. In no time, these two princes killed mother Tadka and Subahu along with their entire army. It was not known why the Lord shot Marichi with an arrow that did not yield, causing him to fall unconscious in the Aranya forest. That morning, when Shabara Sen was on his way to Pampa Sarovar for a bath and completing his daily rituals, he was drawn to the sound of a man groaning. He immediately went to that direction and saw a man groaning in a wounded state. Upon closer inspection, he recognized him. He was Marichi. He immediately called some forest dwellers and took the injured Marichi to Acharya Shabari's Ashram. Acharya Mangala herself began treating him. When he regained consciousness, Acharya Shabari was standing beside him.

Smiling, Acharya Shabari said, 'I told you, uncle Marichi, God understands the feelings of the heart. He certainly won't take your life.'

Marichi then greeted Acharya Shabari with a gesture. It took a few weeks for him to fully recover. Meanwhile, Marichi recounted the story of how these two princes had killed the entire army, mother Tataka, and his brother Subahu, but had not killed him. He used a fruitless arrow throwing him back to the Aranya forest alive. Amazing, amazing! How powerful these two most handsome princes are! They must be incarnations of God.'

When Marichi was fully recovered, he returned to his capital after paying his gratitude to Acharya Shabari.

Time kept passing on. Over the years, Acharya Shabari had become the spiritual Guru of all the forest dwellers including Marichi and his followers. She was addressed as 'Mahatma Shabari'.

Time was passing peacefully. Mahatma Shabari was completely successful in her mission. Now, she had only one thought, 'O my Lord Ram, when would you come to give Darshan to me?'

One morning when she had just woken up from meditation, she heard the sound of "Narayan, Narayan" at her door. She immediately got up and ran to the door of her hut. She saw Brahmarishi Narada himself playing the Veena in front of her hut, singing praises of the Lord. She immediately prostrated herself before the sage, touched his feet, brought him into the hut, washed his feet with water and offered him water to drink.

## **Darshan of Brahmarishi Narada**

Shabari had always been fascinated by the character of Brahmarishi Narada. Despite being born from the womb of an illiterate maidservant in his previous birth, he attained the status of Brahmatva in his present life. Lord Brahma himself honored him by accepting him as his Manas-Putra (Mind-Son). This sort of uniqueness could only be found in the character of a Brahmarishi.

In the hut of Mahatama Shabri, Brahmarishi Narada continued to sing the glory of Lord Hari with the melodious playing of the Veena. While Brahmrishi was engaged in singing the glory of Hari, Mahatma Shabari became immersed in the Brahmarishi's past.

She remembered the story of Brahmarishi Narada's birth told by her father Maharishi Kurtuk. In his previous life, Narada was a Gandharva named Upbarhan. He was very proud of his handsome looks. Once, when the Apsaras and Gandharvas were worshipping Lord Brahma with devotional songs and dance in the service of Brahma, Upbarhan arrived there adorned with women. Seeing Upbarhana's rude behavior, Lord Brahma became enraged and cursed him to be born as a labourer on earth. As a result of this curse, he was born as son to an illiterate maid-servant. His mother, although an illiterate maid-servant had a deep love for the saints. She used to devotedly serve the Sages and saints along with her son. The boy respected the saints and sought their blessings. Gradually, with their blessings all the sins in his heart were washed away. Impressed by the child's devotion, the Sages taught him to chant the Lord's name and meditate upon Him. Unfortunately, his mother died of a snakebite when he was young. The boy was left alone in this world. He was only five years old at the time. Accepting his mother's loss as a supreme blessing from God, he set out to perform penance for Dinanath, the Lord of the Orphans. One day, as the boy sat meditating under a peepal tree, a glimpse of the Lord appeared in his heart like a flash of light which immediately disappeared. His yearning to see God increased. He was praying to God to re-appear and give him Darshan. Then, came a voice from the sky, 'O

Son, you will not have My Darshan again in this life. In your next life, you will find me again as my courtier.'

The boy was satisfied with the voice and continued to pray Lord through out his life. When the time of death came, he left his five-elemental body. At the end of the Kalpa, he incarnated as the (Manas -Putra) mind-son of Lord Brahma. As the mind-son of Brahma, he acquired the knowledge of Brahma from the Trimurti (Trinity), Vishnu, Brahma, and Mahesh. He was well versed in many scriptures like Shruti, Smriti, Vedas, Puranas, Vedanga, Music, Astronomy, Geography, Astrology, Yoga, etc. He was a self-enlightened person, a staunch celibate, knowledgeable about the three times (past, present and future), a constant propagator of devotion to God through the Veena, skilled, intelligent, fearless, humble, self-controlled, truthful, with steadfast wisdom, ascetic, knower of the four purusharthas, supreme yogi, a traveler of the three worlds like the Sun, roaming in all the ages, societies and worlds like the wind, a politician with a controlled mind, infallible, fond of joy, a poet, having selfless love for all living beings, a deity respected in all the worlds by gods, humans and demons who had attained Brahmatva. Lord Brahma conferred a title of 'Brahmrishi' on him.

Mahatma Shabari also remembered her previous birth as told by Maharishi Vashistha when she wanted to commit suicide on the death of her father but Brahmarishi Narada saved her from this grave sin and also made her see Lord Vishnu. Such a great personality Brahmarishi Narada, the embodiment of Brahma himself had come to her hut to bless her, she was filled with joy.

'O daughter, it looks that you are lost in thoughts of your past birth? Wake up. I have come to give you a message from Shri Ram,' said Brahmarishi Narada.

'A message from my Lord Shri Ram, I am so lucky to be in in the mind of my Lord', murmured Mahatma Shabri. Hearing these nectar-like words, Mahatma Shabari's trance was broken.

‘What is the Lord's command for me, Brahmarishi?’ asked Mahatma Shabari eagerly.

‘O daughter, I understand that you know the story of killing of Tadka and Subahu. Marichi has already told you. Thereafter, Shri Ram with his footprints rescued the Sage Gautam's wife Ahalya at his Ashram. Afterward, the two princes Shri Ram and Shri Lakshman with Maharishi Vishwamitra participated in Sita's swayamvara which was held in Janakpuri. Shri Ram broke Lord Shiva's bow, married Sita and returned to Ayodhya. Emperor Dasharatha was about to declare Shri Ram as the crown prince when, mother Kaikeyi asked him for two promises as per Shri Ram's wishes, the kingdom of Ayodhya for her son Bharat and 14 years of exile to Shri Ram. To complete the task of His incarnation, He has now departed for exile where he will liberate the demons and rid of the earth of sinners. You will have His Darshan during His forest exile. At that timer, He will impart knowledge of the new method of devotion to you, Nav-Vidha-Bhakti, and show you the path to Saket Dham. Before that, daughter, you have two important tasks to perform. First, Tara, wife of Bali, has falsely believed that her husband Bali has died and wants to commit Sati ritual. You must go to Balidham and convince her not to commit Sati ritual because Bali is alive. Second, Maharishi Matanga now wants to leave his body and depart for Vishnulok Dham. I must leave soon to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram, where I will await your return from Balidham. A yagna will be performed there under your supervision. After that, Maharishi Matanga will take Jal Samadhi in the Pampa lake’, said the sage Narada.

‘What? Maharishi Matanga now wishes to leave his body and go to Vishnuloka! exclaimed Mahatma Shabari with great surprise.

Mahatma Shabri continued, ‘He is like a father to me. Of course, I will conduct the Yajna with you before his samadhi. We will all gain knowledge through your wisdom. Bu tell me first Brahmishi how did Tara believe that her husband Bali is dead when he is still alive?

‘Daughter, I will tell you this story briefly. Bali killed the demon Dundbhi. Enraged by this act, his brother Mayaavi challenged Bali to a battle. Bali

and Mayaavi fought and reached a cave in the mountain. Mayaavi entered the cave. His brother Sugriva was also in the battle with Bali. Before pursuing Mayaavi into the cave, Bali told Sugriva to wait for him at the entrance of the cave. He would return soon after killing this demon. But Bali did not emerge from the cave even after several weeks. Sugreev became restless. Bali killed Mayavi but before dying, the illusionist Mayavi screamed in Bali's voice. Hearing Bali's scream and seeing blood gushing out of the cave, Sugreev assumed that Mayavi had killed his brother Bali. Fearing that Mayavi would kill him too, he closed the cave with a large stone and left. The ignorant Sugriv did not know that his brother Bali was alive and had killed Mayavi.'

Brahmrishi Narad continued, 'O daughter, keeping the divine play a secret, your only challenge right now is to convince Tara not to perform Sati ritual. Please do not disclose to anyone that Bali is alive. Destiny will take its own turn in due course of time. Just follow the orders of Lord Ram and proceed immediately to Baligram, Bali's capital, and convince Tara. I will wait for you at the Ashram of Maharishi Matanga.'

Obeying the orders of the Sage, Mahatma Shabari immediately left for Baligram. Brahmarishi Narada also then proceeded towards the Ashram of Maharishi Matanga. On the way, Mahatma Shabari met an old vulture. Seeing his terrifying form Mahatma Shabari was initially frightened, but then gathering courage in her heart she approached him and introduced herself saying, 'O great, powerful old vulture, I Shabri, daughter of Shabar Sen and disciple of Maharishi Matanga, salute you. Please introduce yourself to me.'

Then the old vulture said, "O great devotee of Lord Ram Mahatma Shabari, there is no need for you to introduce yourself. I know you very well. My name is Jatayu. I am the brother of Sampati who lives at seashore. I am the sworn brother of the king of Awadh Emperor Dasharatha, therefore, Lord Ram and his three other brothers, Lord Bharata, Lord Lakshmana, and Lord Shatrughna are my adopted sons. Once, Emperor Dasharatha fought a battle with Lord Shani. He invited me to participate in this battle. I was then in my prime. This battle was taking place in the sky. Emperor Dasharatha could not bear the blows of Lord

Shani, and I thought that he had died. I brought his body to the ground on my wings immediately and began to mourn the loss of my brother. Just then, the sage Narada arrived chanting, 'Narayan, Narayan. Seeing me mourning the death of Emperor Dasharatha, he advised me to pray Shanidev. I then began to pray Shanidev with a pure heart for forgiveness chanting, Om Sham Shanaishcharaya Namah, a prayer to Shanidev. Pleased with my austerity, Shanidev appeared and said that O son, your brother Dasharatha had simply fainted. Bring water from the nearby lake and sprinkle it on his face while touching this sapphire gem to his face. Soon, his unconsciousness will end and he will regain his life.'

Jatayu continued, 'Following Shanidev's orders, I brought water from Pampa Lake and while praying Lord Shanidev began sprinkling water on his face and touched the sapphire gem given by Shanidev to his face. Shortly after, he awoke and embraced me. When he was awakened, I recounted how Shanidev had given him life. Emperor Dasharatha then felt reverence for Lord Shanidev and he too performed penance and sought his forgiveness.'

Jatayu further said, 'My brother Emperor Dasharatha granted Empress Kaikeyi two boons, the kingdom of Ayodhya to his son Bharata and 14 years of exile to Lord Rama. However, he could not bear the separation from Lord Rama and passed away. When I learned of this, I went to Ayodhya to pay my last respects to my brother. Ayodhya was nearly empty. I saw only a few elderly people, women, and children there. I learned of Ayodhya's desolation from a vulture. Bharata did not accept the kingdom of Ayodhya. He had gone to Chitrakoot to persuade his brother Lord Rama to return to Ayodhya and all of Ayodhya subjects had accompanied him. First, I reached the banks of the Sarayu River to pay my respects to my brother Emperor Dasharatha and then, I too proceeded towards Chitrakoot. I was astonished by the magnificent sight there. Bharata fell at the feet of Shri Ram, begging forgiveness on his own behalf and on behalf of his mother Kaikeyi and begged him to return to Ayodhya and accept the throne. Lord Shri Ram embraced him. He lovingly expressed his firm resolve to Bharata to live in the forest for 14 years as per his parents' orders. He gave Bharata his sandals and bid him farewell. I met Lord Ram and then He told me that in the last year of his exile He would come to

Aranyvan and at that time would give me Darshan again. Then, bowing at the Lord's feet, I returned to my abode in the forest. I am waiting for him here.'

Thus, having met Jatayu, bowing to him and receiving his blessings, Mahatma Shabari departed for Baligram.

In a short time, Mahatma Shabari arrived at Baligram. She saw the entire city immersed in grief. The Baligram flag was lowered in mourning for Bali's death. Just then she heard the bugle announcing an emergency meeting. Prince Sugriva had called an emergency meeting of all the senior ministers. The throne could not remain vacant for long so, it was time to decide who would occupy the throne. After arriving at the gate of the palace of Bali, Mahatma Shabari sent word of her arrival through a soldier to prince Sugriva and Empress Tara. Hearing the news, prince Sugriva ran barefoot to the palace gate to greet and welcome Mahatma Shabari. After greeting and touching her feet, he brought Mahatma Shabari to Empress Tara. A mountain of grief had fallen upon Empress Tara. Her hair was disheveled. Her red eyes indicated that she had probably not slept for days and had been crying continuously. Mahatma Shabari embraced her.

Mahatma Shabari spoke lovingly and comfortingly, O dear Tara, despite being the daughter of the highly learned physician Sushen and a self-realized Brahmagyan (knowledge of the Supreme Being), what a mess you have created. Bali did go to the cave and yes, prince Sugreev did see the blood flowing from the cave, but his body was never recovered. The prince certainly heard the horrific cry in Emperor Bali's voice, but you and I knew very well that the illusionist was adept at creating any kind of voice. Therefore, until Bali's body was found, your grief is futile and being ready to commit Sati is against Dharma. I am confident that Bali might return soon. Therefore, leave your grief aside and now arrange for the proper administration of the kingdom and take care of your son Angad. Go to the assembly and exercising your authority as Empress, crown prince Sugreev on the throne until Bali returns and assist him in the royal duties.'

Empress Tara, bewildered, looked at Mahatma Shabari in surprise and said, 'Yes, you may be right mother. I didn't think of that. This is not the

time to mourn but to care for son Angad and establish a strong governance of the kingdom. You are right mother in saying that there is no evidence that Bali has been killed.'

Empress Tara rose Immediately, touched Mahatma Shabari's feet and left the mourning room preparing to go to the royal assembly. She also requested Mahatma Shabari to accompany her. Accompanied by Empress Tara, Mahatma Shabari arrived at the emergency meeting of all the ministers called by prince Sugreev. Everyone immediately stood up and welcomed Mahatma Shabari and the Empress. The Empress seated Mahatma Shabari on a high seat and addressed the gathering.

Empress Tara addressed the gathering, 'Dear prince Sugreev, ministers and generals supporting Emperor Bali, we are passing through a tragic event. As per Mother Shabari's orders and after deep consideration, I have come to the conclusion that it is time to anoint prince Sugreev as the king. Therefore, I support it. For the sake of raising my son Angad and after Mother Shabari's persuasion that becoming a Sati at this time is against the religion, I have also given up my stubbornness to become a Sati. My son Angad and I will now fully support Emperor Sugreev.

The entire gathering resounded with the slogans, 'Victory to Empress Tara, victory to her!'

Then, Empress Tara left the gathering and went to her palace with Mahatma Shabari. With full respect and veneration, Mother Shabari was duly worshipped. Mahatma Shabari then sought permission from Empress Tara to depart for her Ashram. Respectfully, Empress Tara and king Sugreeva then bid her farewell. Shortly after, Mahatma Shabari returned to her Ashram and departed the next day for the Ashram of Maharishi Matanga where Brahmarishi Narada was waiting for her.

With Brahmarishi Narada as the chief priest, Mahatma Shabari and Acharya Mangala conducted the yagna. The entire atmosphere was sanctified by the chanting of mantras and the Yagna offerings. This great Yagna continued for seven days.

At the end of the Yagna, Maharishi Matanga addressed all the Ashram residents and said, 'It is my great fortune that Brahmarishi Narada himself has come here. This body has grown old. In my meditation, I have obtained permission from the Lord to leave this body. At my request, the Lord sent Brahmarishi Narada to conduct this Yagna in my final moments and I am extremely pleased that my beloved disciples, Mahatma Shabari and Acharya Mangala successfully conducted Yagna. Now, my blessings and best wishes are with you all. After my departure, I request everyone not to mourn my departure. Why mourn? I have achieved all the goals of my life. By pleasing Lord Hari with my prayers, I attained His abode. I have taught worthy and capable Aryan disciples like you all who are spreading humanity across this earth. Continue to serve Nature and humanity selflessly in the same way, this is my last message'

Then, turning to Brahmarishi, Maharishi Matanga said, 'Now, give your permission, Brahmarishi.'

Brahmarishi Narada embraced Maharishi Matanga and then, accompanied by the chanting of mantras, Maharishi Matanga took Jal-Samadhi in the Pampa lake. After Maharishi Matanga departed for Saket Dham, a meeting of all the Ashram's senior disciples and teachers was held under the chairmanship of Brahmarishi Narada.

Ayurved Acharya Anant Dev had also grown very old. Acharya Mangala was his only child and was a celibate. Requesting humbly to Mahatma Shabari, she expressed her desire to devote rest of her life to the serve her parents. Her disciples were working in all the hospitals in the forest. It was unlikely that these hospitals would not be able to function without Acharya Mangala. However, Acharya Mangala's guidance was still necessary. Mahatma Shabari relieved her of her position as the chief physician but requested her to continue to be a special advisor, which Acharya Mangala accepted.

Acharya Jagadmurti also wanted to return to Ayodhya to live with his family but Mahatma Shabari addressed him saying, 'Acharya Jagadmurti, according to my information Shri Ram will soon take up residence in the Aranyvan with his brother Shri Lakshman and wife Sita. Keeping their

safety in mind and because you are His ardent devotee and servant, I cannot accept your request until Shri Ram himself completes His 14-year exile and returns to Ayodhya.'

'Will Shri Ram take up His residence in the Aranyvan? Mahatma, please forgive my limited understanding. It will be my good fortune to serve my Lord. I accept your command,' Acharya Jagadmurti said.

Addressing the other disciples of Maharishi Matanga, Mahatma Shabari said, 'The Maharishi has journeyed to Saket Dham only after completing your education. Following his command, now all of you should serve Nature and humanity selflessly. I humbly request that you all return to your homes, establish Ashrams in your areas and spread Maharishi Matanga's knowledge everywhere'.

The gathering echoed with shouts of "Sadhuvad, Sadhuvad!"

Brahmarishi Narada embraced Mahatma Shabari, blessed her and bid her farewell. The Brahmarishi then departed, singing the hymn Narayan, Narayan.'

The next day, all the other disciples except Acharya Mangala, her parents, her companions and a few attendants, sought permission from Mahatma Shabari to leave the Ashram and depart for their respective areas. Mahatma Shabarigave them permission and then departed for her Ashram. She had just arrived at the Ashram when another sad news struck her. Shabar Sen laid on his deathbed waiting for Mahatma Shabari before giving up his life and depart for the abode of the Lord. Immediately, Mahatma Shabari set off for Shabara Sen's residence.

## **Salvation of Shabar Sen and Meeting with Surpanakha**

Mahatma Shabari quickly arrived at Shabar Sen's residence. She saw that all the prominent figures of the Bhil community were present there waiting for her. She went straight to Shabar Sen's room. His throat was swollen and he was having great difficulty in speaking. Upon seeing Mahatma Shabari, a smile lit up at his face. He wanted to say something, but the words could not come out clearly. Mahatma Shabri came very close to him and took his hand in her hand. Just by her touch, he felt as if all his pain had vanished.

He said in a very soft voice, 'Daughter, I know Maharishi Matanga has attained Mahasamadhi. It is time for me to join him. Please bid me farewell.'

With tears welling up in her eyes, Mahatma Shabari seemed to support his words and said, 'Of course, father, Lord Vishnu Himself is waiting for you to grant you salvation. You will no longer have to be reborn on this earth.'

It seemed as if Maharishi Matanga's name came to his lips and then he departed from this world.

Shabar Sen's wife was deeply shocked by his death and fainted. Mahatma Shabari then ran to her side. She took her head in her lap immediately and began caressing her hair. It was too late to revive her. She, too, had left this physical body along with her husband.

Mahatma Shabri then sent a message through a servant to Acharya Mangala at Maharishi Matanga's Ashram describing the situation. Acharya Mangala immediately arrived at Shabar Sen's residence and sat down next to Mahatma Shabari. Mahatma Shabri then softly instructed Acharya Mangala to immediately convey the news of Maharishi Matanga's Mahasamadhi and the deaths of Shabara Sen and his wife to Maharishi Kurtaki at the Prayagraj Gurukul through Acharya Jagadmurti.

Subsequently, Mahatma Shabari herself conducted the last rites of Shabar Sen and his wife. After the final rites were completed, Acharya Mangala returned to Maharishi Matanga's Ashram. She relayed Mahatma Shabari's orders to Acharya Jagadmurti. Acharya Jagadmurti immediately arranged for one of his companions to convey both these sad news, Maharishi Matanga's Mahasamadhi and the passing of her parents, to Maharishi Kurtaki in Prayagraj.

Mahatma Shabari stayed at Shabar Sen's residence for a few days. There was a stream of people offering condolences. In addition, she had to select a leader for the Bhil community with priest Singham. After consultation with everyone, they appointed Samrajaya Sen, a young and promising member of the Bhil community as the leader of the Bhils. Samrajaya Sen was Shabar Sen's nephew and was skilled in every skill necessary to lead the Bhils. No one opposed this choice of Mahatma Shabari, priest Singham and the senior Bhils.

Marichi also received the sad news of the passing away of Shabar Sen and his wife. He immediately set out to meet and express his condolences at Shabar Sen's residence. At that time, Surpanakha, the younger sister of Ravana the king of Lanka was staying as his guest in his capital, Abhayaranya. She learned from his maternal uncle Marichi that Mahatma Shabari's parents had passed away. She had heard a lot about Mahatma Shabari. Mahatma Shabari was highly revered in the forest, the spiritual Guru of all the Bhils and other forest dwellers and of his maternal uncle Marichi himself. She must have some special quality that had impressed everyone. She would surely help to find a suitable husband for me.

Demons are always preoccupied with their own selfish interests. Consider Surpanakha's purpose in meeting Mahatma Shabari. Instead of meeting a great soul and receiving her blessings and getting spiritual enlightenment, she expected her to help her to find a suitable husband.

Surpanakha told her uncle Marichi about her desire to meet the great Sage Shabari and he agreed to let accompany her.

Who was Surpanakha and why was she searching for a suitable husband in the forest?

Suparnakha was the sister of Ravana, the king of Lanka, Kumbhakaran, and Vibhishana. She was the daughter of Sage Vishvashrav and his second wife, Kaikashi. She fell in love with Vidyutjha, the great demon who was the commander of the Kalkeya kingdom. She had a Gandharva marriage with him. The Kalkeya kingdom became the target of Ravana's imperial expansionism. He declared war on the Kalkeya kingdom intending to conquer it and annex it to the Lankan kingdom. Upon receiving this news, Surpanakha tried to convince her brother Ravana to spare her husband. But Ravana, the king of Lanka was blinded by his desire to expand his kingdom so, he attacked the Kalkeya kingdom. Vidyutjha being the commander of the Kalkeya kingdom led the Kalkeya army in this war. Ravana and Vidyutjha fought and Ravana killed Vidyutjha. Surpanakha was deeply saddened by her husband's death and vowed to cause Ravana's destruction.

When Ravana returned to Lanka filled with joy and pride after defeating Vidyutjha in battle and conquering the Kalkeya kingdom, he found his sister deeply saddened. His heart was moved. He began to apologize to her sister for this act. He also promised Surpanakha that he would help her to marry a person to whoever he considered suitable for her husband in all three worlds, using whomever she might like. He will use all the possible tactics, Saam, Daam, Danda, Bheda, to force him to marry her.

According to Valmiki Ramayana, Surpanakha was an Apsara named Nayantra of Indraloka, in her previous birth. She was one of the most beautiful prominent Apsara among Urvashi, Rambha, Menaka, and Punjikasthala etc. Once, a dance ceremony involving Apsaras was being performed in Indra's court. While dancing, Nayantra succeeded in seducing Indra with her sensual eyes and became his lover. At that time, a Sage named Vajra was performing severe penance on earth. Indra, fearing that the Sage might usurp his heavenly throne, sent Nayantra to earth to disrupt his penance. Nayantra succeeded in disrupting his penance but the enraged Sage cursed her to become a demoness. Upon her apology and knowing the truth that she had come to disrupt his

penance at Indra's behest and that she was not personally at fault, Vajra Rishi blessed her that she will be blessed by Lord Himself in her next birth.

After her husband was killed by Ravana, Suparnakha travelled throughout the Universe but could not find a suitable husband for her. As mentioned earlier, she was with her maternal uncle Marichi in Aranyvan in hope to find a suitable husband there. In this endeavor, she considered enlisting the support of the great Sage Shabari.

Marichi arrived at Shabar Sen's home with Surpanakha. He embraced Mahatma Shabari and expressed his condolences. He also introduced Surpanakha to Mahatma Shabari. Mahatma Shabari welcomed Surpanakha and said, 'O Sumukhi, I know you are from the lineage of the Sages and sister of Ravan, the king of Lanka. I welcome you at my father's home. You are very blessed. I do hope that all is well in Lanka. I wonder why did you leave the golden city and are wandering in this forest? I have heard that your brother Ravana had even conquered the death. Being the sister of such a powerful brother, why are you wondering and came to meet an ordinary woman like me?'

Mahatma Shabari's humble words deeply impacted Surpanakha's heart. Her heart swelled with pride at the praise of her brother, the king of Lanka.

Suparnakha said, 'Mahatma, whatever you said about my brother Ravana is absolutely true. Lord Brahma himself has taught him the Vedas and Vedanta and all skills of the world. But being angry with him over a small matter, he made him the ruler of the Rakshas's clan.'

'Brahmadev became angry with your brother, I did not understand. O Sumukhi tell me the whole story in detail', said Mahatma Shabari in a sweet voice.

Surpanakha then said with great pride, 'You know Mahatma that we are descendants of the noble lineage of Sage Pulastya. The great Sage Vishrava is our father. The highly learned Acharya Manichandra gave us our primary education. After that, our father Sage Vishrava sent us to

Brahmadev to learn the Vedas, Vedanta, and weaponry science. We were taught by Brahmadev and learnt all the wisdom in a short period of time. Mandodari, daughter of Mayadanav was also a disciple of Brahmadev at that time. My brother Ravana and Mandodari fell in love. Brahmadev saw them embracing each other one day. According to Brahmadev since both of them were his disciple, my brother Ravana and Mandodari were Gurubhai and Gurubashen (brother and sister). This unforgivable sin angered Lord Brahma. He cursed us to descend on earth and live in the Rakshas's clan and thus, abandoned us. My brother Ravana asked the demon Maya for the hand of his daughter Mandodari in marriage. Seeing Ravana's bright future, he got his daughter Mandodari married to my brother Ravana. My father, the Sage Vishrava then handed over the golden Lanka received as dakshina by him from Mahadeva to my brother Ravana. Thus, my brother Ravana became the ruler of Lanka. Since then, we have been living in Lanka.'

'Your father, the sage Vishrava handed over Mahadeva's Lanka to your brother Ravana. I did not understand. How come your father Vishrava got Lanka from Mahadev as Dakshina?' asked Mahatma Shabari.

'Mahatma, it was a long time ago when Goddess Parvati expressed her desire to Mahadev to build a unique golden palace for her residence. Mahadev explained to her that they were residents of Mount Kailash and would not like to live in a palace/ Still. Out of the stubbornness of Jagadamba, He ordered Vishwakarma to build a unique golden palace. Vishwakarma built this unique city Lanka with gold and gems with the help of Mayadanav. My father Rishi Vishrava performed the house warming ceremony as per all the Sanatan rituals. Mahadev was very impressed by his knowledge and devotion. Pleased with him, He told him to get a boon. My father Rishi Vishrava was mesmerized by the magnificent beauty of this city Lanka; hence he asked Mahadev for this unique city as a boon. As promised, Mahadev gave this palace and city to my father Rishi Vishrava then handed over this golden city to my brother Ravana,' said Surpanakha.

Mahatma Shabari spoke to Supernkha with a serious expression as if she was completely unaware of this story, 'Well, you are a sister of such a

brave and courageous brother! What service can I be able to provide to you?’

‘Mahatma, I am searching for a suitable husband. Please help me to find a suitable husband. Once successful in this mission, I will reward you whatever you may desire,’ said Surpanakha with great pride.

‘O daughter Surpanakha, I am growing old now. What could I possibly wish for? But yes, for sure a beautiful woman like you deserves a special husband. I have one in mind. You will have to wait for a few days. You will find him right here in the forest,’ Mahatma Shabari said sarcastically.

Surpanakha did not understand the Mahatma's sarcasm. It is said that a man blinded in the rainy season sees only green. She was captivated by the Mahatma's words and said, ‘Sure Mahatma, I will wait. Tell me, when, where, and how will I find this suitable husband?’

‘Of course, daughter. I will give you a signal when the time comes. Stay in touch with me and keep me informed of your activities,’ said Mahatma Shabari.

Hearing these kind words of appreciation from Mahatma Shabari, Surpanakha returned to the capital of uncle Maruchi, heartily thanking the Mahatma.

After spending some time at Shabar Sen's home, Mahatma Shabari also returned to her Ashram. Returning to the Ashram, Mahatma Shabari spent most of her time serving the forest dwellers and animals. Every creature in the forest loved her more than their own lives. Not only men and women, even the wild animals of the forest obeyed her orders.

As instructed by Mahatma Shabri, Acharya Jagadmurti sent his associate and close friend Acharya Shankardev to Maharishi Kurtaki (Shramana) in Prayagraj to inform her of the sad news of Maharishi Matanga's Mahasamadhi and the departure of her parents to heaven. Maharishi Kurtaki seemed to have sensed this beforehand. Her heart was disturbed for some days. She was not able to sleep properly at night. She used to

wake up every now and then remembering her Guru Maharshi Matang and her parents. She was expecting some bad news. At that time, Acharya Shankardev reached Prayagraj Ashram and after meeting Maharshi Bharadwaj told him all the sad news. Maharshi Bharadwaj then called Maharshi Kurtaki to his hut and told her this sad news. Maharshi Kurtaki became silent. Then, Maharshi Bharadwaj consoled her. After some time, both Maharshi Bharadwaj and Maharshi Kurtaki reached the banks of Mother Ganga to offer tarpan to these great personalities.

ॐ आं हीं क्रों दत्तात्रये नमः| ॐ गुरुभ्यः नमः| ॐ पितृभ्यः नमः| ॐ मात्रभ्यः नमः|  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः|

**Om Aam Hreem Kron Dattatraye Namah. Om Gurubhyah Namah.  
Om Pitribhyah Namah. Om Matrabhyah Namah.  
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih.**

## **Mahatma Shabari, the Peacemaker**

Maharishi Matanga's Mahasamadhi, the passing away of Shabar Sen and his wife and Acharya Mangala's resignation from the position of chief physician and settling in Maharishi Matanga's Ashram due to her devotion to her parents, had left Mahatma Shabari somewhat isolated. She began spending more time in solitude meditating. Sometimes, she would leave for the forest early in the morning and return very late, wandering for hours and chatting with wild animals. Her health was also gradually deteriorating. Her heart began to yearn for samadhi. She felt that perhaps the Lord had successfully fulfilled all the goals and objectives of her life and that the time had come now for her to depart for the eternal abode. However, before she attained samadhi, she desired to have Darshan of the Lord with her own eyes and for that reason she postponed her decision to give up her life. Her eyes were always fixed at the Ashram gate, hoping that the Lord who was now in exile, would soon appear before her. She kept repeating in her heart, 'Prabhu, please come quickly. This body cannot support me for much longer.'

Mahatma Shabari left today her bed even before the break of dawn. Sleep eluded her. In the darkness of the night, she set out to bathe in Pampa Sarovar. She had just entered the lake to bathe when the cry of a lion cub caught her attention. The Mahatma, who understood well the language of animals sensed that the lion cub was in some distress. She immediately left the lake. Quickly donned her clothes and with rapid strides, set off in the direction from where the cub's heartbreaking cry was coming. She had barely reached a short distance then she saw an elephant trying to kill the lion cub by grasping it in his trunk. Gradually, the pressure of his trunk on the small lion was increasing and it was writhing in pain. Mahatma challenged the elephant immediately. Somewhere within his old body, she found so much strength that she shook the elephant's trunk so forcefully that the lion cub released himself and ran away. Thus, saving the life of the helpless little child, she stood before the elephant and said, 'O Vakratunda, you are the epitome of justice. Why such injustice? Why were you trying to kill that helpless lion cub?'

The elephant bowed his head before Mahatma Shabari and said in a humble voice, 'Mahatma, when I was a child, some men came to the forest where I was living with my mother. They killed my mother and took me away. They tortured me greatly. They sold me to a circus owner who would never give me a full meal, but would beat me always to put me on a spectacle. I did escape today from that evil man and ran away from circus. But this human behavior has completely changed my mentality. I have become violent, Mahatma. I fear everything. I was even afraid of this lion cub so, I decided to kill him. Forgive me, Mahatma.'

Then Mahatma Shabari placed her loving hand on the elephant's trunk and blessed him, 'O king of elephants, you may now roam freely in this forest. No one can harm you; this is my promise.'

Then the elephant bowed to Mahatma Shabari and left.

Mahatma Shabari had such a great personality. A parrot, sitting on a tree nearby was watching all this.

He shouted, 'You are so blessed mother. Why should not Mahatma Shabari, beloved of the Lord have such a human heart?'

Mahatma Shabri went closer to parrot. She took him on her shoulder and said lovingly, 'O parrot, who are you? Where have you come from? By speaking such kind words to me, you are reminding me of my Lord. Surely, you know my Lord.'

'Mahatma, I am the beloved parrot of Ahalya, the wife of Maharishi Gautam. I have seen this great woman dying slowly, slowly, after being deceived by Indra despite no fault of hers. I have seen her reduced to stone waiting for a long time for Lord Rama's feet to purify her. But the wait was ultimately over and fruitful. Lord Rama accompanied with Brahmarishi Vishwamitra personally visited her Ashram and restored her purity. Maharishi Gautam then gladly accepted her back as his wife. O mother, Lord Hari knows that you too are equally restless to have His Darshan. The Lord has sent me to you with the message that you will soon

see him. Do not be restless.,’ the parrot sweetly conveyed Sri Hari’s message to Mahatma Shabari.

Thank you, thank you,’ the words came out from the Mahatma’s mouth. She took the parrot to her Ashram. Every day, Shuka would recite countless Bhagavad stories to her and the Mahatma would listen with great attention. Time passed on in this way. Then one day, Mahatma Shabri received information that Lord Rama with his brother Lakshmana and wife Sita was residing in Panchavati and was ready to perform his divine act. Lord Rama sent a message to Mahatma to begin the final stages of His exile and initiate the plan for Ravana’s destruction.

On hearing message from the Lord, Mahatma Shabri sent a message to Marichi through a messenger that a suitable groom had been found for Surpanakha. Her prospective husband was camped in Panchavati so, she should reach there immediately, select her groom and prepare for the marriage. Marichi’s experienced eyes understood everything, but he immediately sent the message to Surpanakha in Lanka. Surpanakha had been waiting for this opportunity for long.

Upon receiving the message, she immediately went to Panchavati, disguised as a beautiful woman and fell in love with Shri Ram. Shri Ram, claiming to be married, pointed her to Shri Lakshman. Meanwhile, Lakshman cut off her nose and ears.

Thus humiliated, she went to Ravana’s generals, Khar and Dushan, and urged them to avenge her insult. Her heart was still infatuated with Shri Ram and Shri Lakshman. Therefore, she ordered them to capture them alive so that she could marry them. Under no circumstances should they be killed. Yes, they had a woman with them. Killing her would be the icing on the cake. Acting on the orders of their master Ravana’s sister, Khar and Dushan attacked the two princes. Shri Ram ordered Lakshman to remain in the hut to protect Sita and He destroyed Khar and Dushan along with their army in the battle.

Seeing the destruction of the mighty Khara, Dushan and their entire army, Surpanakha was astonished. She immediately remembered the words of

Lord Brahma, 'When a human kills Khar and Dushan, then understand that your revenge against Ravana will be completed. Those humans will kill Ravana.'

The flame of vengeance against Ravana for the murder of her husband ignited in her. She immediately came to Lanka to Ravana and, informed him of the killing of Khar, Dushan and their army She began fueling the fire by inciting Ravana against Lord Rama.

Ravana was in deep thought. No human could kill Khar and Dushan. He must surely be an incarnation of Lord Hari and had incarnated to grant him salvation. This tamasic body cannot perform worship, prayer, or penance so, only by taking enmity with Him and be killed at his hands, I could attain salvation.

Therefore, he began plotting to confront Him. He hatched a plan to kidnap Sita, the wife of Lord Rama. He chose Marichi to assist him in this task. He immediately reached Marichi's capital Abhayaranya in his Pushpak Vimana. He explained his plan to Marichi. He asked Marichi to disguise himself as a golden deer and attract Sita. Then, Rama would chase him for his golden deer skin. He should somehow get Lakshman to follow him. When Sita was left alone, he would abduct her and take her to Lanka. Marichi tried hard to convince Ravana. Marichi and said, 'O Rasvan, you are a fool. If you remember, I was wounded in the Sundar forest by the fruitless arrows of those to whom you consider ordinary humans. They destroyed my mother Tadka, my brother Subahu and now Khar, Dushan, and their entire army. You still consider them humans.'

These teachings of Marichi had no effect on Ravana. He issued a final warning to Marichi, 'either be a part of my plan or be prepared to die right now.'

'It is better to die at the hands of Shri Ram where I will attain salvation than at the hands of this fool,' he murmured and agreed to be a part of Ravana's plan.

Satisfied and determined to carry out the task the next day, Ravana returned to Lanka in his Pushpak Vimana.

Then, Marichi went to the Ashram of Mahatma Shabari. He seemed extremely worried and nervous. The Mahatma welcomed him with a suitable seat and offered him refreshments. She then inquired about his anxiety. Marichi then recounted the story that how Ravana came to his palace, asked him to take the form of a golden deer to lure Sita and kidnap her.

‘My death is now certain, Mahatma. Pray for me,’ Marichi said.

Mahatma Shabri then prayed for his well-being.

After Marichi left, she recounted the entire incident to Shuka and immediately sent him to Shri Ram's hut.

Hearing from Shuka about Ravana's plan, Shri Ram said to Sita, ‘My dear Sita, the time has come for me to begin My leela. Therefore, please enter the fire and leave the imaged Sita in your place for the leela.’

The next day, Ravana, the king of Lanka executed his plan. Marichi, disguised as a golden deer, captivated Sita's heart and then Sita persuaded Shri Ram to kill the golden deer to make a seat for herself from its skin. Shri Ram pursued him and killed him with his arrows. While dying, Marichi emitted a painful cry, echoing in Shri Ram's voice which made Sita believe that Shri Ram was in trouble. Sita then sent Shri Lakshman to assist Shri Ram. Finding Sita alone in the hut, Ravana, disguised as a Sage abducted her. Goswami Tulsidas has beautifully depicted this story in the Shri Ramcharitmanas, hence it is presented here in brief.

When Shri Ram and Lakshman returned to their hut after killing Marichi, they were deeply saddened to find Sita missing and began searching for her. Shri Ram knew that His spy Shabari would know the full secret of the abduction so, He headed towards the Ashram of Mahatma Shabari. On the way, He found the injured Jatayu. Hearing Sita's cries for help, Jatayu

challenged Ravana but his strength was no match to unstoppable Ravana's might. He tried to save Sita but was badly injured.

Jatayu informed Shri Ram that Ravana had abducted Sita. He left the mortal body in the laps of Shri Ram and attained salvation.

After performing his last rites, Shri Ram and Lakshman proceeded towards the Ashram of Mahatma Shabari.

## Meeting Shri Ram and Salvation

Since Marichi visited Shabari at her Ashram and told her about Ravana's plan to abduct Sita, Mahatma Shabri was convinced that Shri Ram would visit her soon. She waited for Him anxiously and patiently.

Then, Mahatma Sabari saw that Shri Ram was coming towards her hut with Shri Lakshman. Remembering her Guru's words, her heart was filled with joy. As soon as they stepped into her Ashram, she fell on the feet of the two handsome brothers, one dark and another fair in complexion. Shri Ram had lotus-like eyes, long arms, wearing a crown of matted hair on His head and a garland of forest flowers around His neck. She was overwhelmed with love. She was speechless, repeatedly bowing her head at the Lord's lotus feet.

She took water in a pot and respectfully washed the feet of both brothers and seated them on beautiful seats. Then, she brought extremely juicy and delicious berry fruits and gave them to eat. Some scriptures describe that she tasted the fruits to feel if these are sweets before offering to Lord Ram and Shri Lakshman.

The Lord praised her repeatedly and ate those berries with love. Her love for Him increased immensely and she said, 'O Lord of the Universe, how can I pray You? I am extremely foolish, lowly, and sinful.'

Then Shri Ram spoke sweetly, 'O Mahatma, you know very well that devotion is dear to me. Despite having all these great qualities such as Brahmin lineage, knowledge of religion, fame, wealth, strength, good family, virtues and wisdom, if a person is devoid of devotion, he/ she is like a cloud without water.'

Shri Ram then imparted the knowledge of the nine types of devotion (Nav-Vidha-Bhakti) to Mahatma Shabari.

Shri Ram said, 'O Mahatma, I will now describe to you my nine types of devotion. The first devotion is the company of Saints. The second devotion

is love to my Leelas. The third devotion is to serve the Guru's lotus feet without pride. The fourth devotion is to abandon deceit and sing my virtues. The fifth devotion is to constantly chant the mantra of My name with unwavering faith. The sixth devotion is to control the senses and work with decency and detachment (following only the religious teachings and not desiring any rewards) and constantly engaging in the saintly conducts (respecting saints and incorporating their teachings into lives). The seventh devotion is to see the world as filled with me with equanimity (Raamay) and to respect the Saints even more than me. The eighth devotion is to be content with whatever God has given to him/ her and not to see the faults among others, even in their dreams. The ninth devotion is to behave simply and without deceit with everyone, to have faith in Me in the heart and to be free from joy or sorrow under any circumstances. Whomsoever finds his or her mind absorbed in even one of these nine types of devotion (Nav-Vidha-Bhakti), be it man, woman, inanimate or animate, is the dearest to me. O Mahatma, you possess all types of these nine devotions. Therefore, the state which is rare even for Yogis has become accessible to you today. O Mahatma, now tell me whatever news you know of my beloved, the most beautiful Janaki.'

**जनकसुता कइ सुधि भामिनी | जानहि कहु करिबरगामिनी ||**

**Janakasuta Kai Sudhi Bhamini |  
Jaanahi Kahu Karibargamini ||**

Then, Mahatma Shabari said, 'O Lord of Raghus, go to Kishkindha Mountain on the other side of Pampa Lake. There you will befriend with Sugreeva. O hero of Raghus, he will help to you to find mother Sita and also help you to win the battle against Ravana..

**पंपा सरहि जाहु रघुराई | तहँ होइहि सुग्रीव मिताई ||  
सो सब कहिहि देव रघुबीरा | जानतहँ पूछहु मतिधीरा ||**

**Pampa Sarahi Jaahu Raghuraee |  
Tahan Hoihi Sugreev Mitae ||  
So Sab Kahihi Dev Raghubeera |  
Jaanatahoon Poochhahu Matidheera ||**

(Goswami Tulsidas has thus hinted at Mahatma Shabari's role as a spy.)

Lord Shri Ram was pleased and asked Mahatma Shabari to ask for a boon.

Mahatma Shabari said, 'O Lord, You gave me a father as knowledgeable as Maharishi Kurtuk who was devoted to God. After that, you also gave me Gurus like Maharishi Bharadwaj, Maharishi Vashistha, and Maharishi Matanga. The most knowledgeable about the Supreme Being. You made my life meaningful by engaging me in Your work. While working for You, I met Shabar Sen and his family who loved me intensely. For their selfless love, I will always be grateful. What more may I desire, my Lord? Keep me at Your feet forever and grant me permission to go to Saket Dham. However, I have one wish, Lord. I want to hear the sacred story of Your killing of Ravana and coronation at the kingdom of Ayodhya.'

Then, Shri Ram said, 'O Mahatma, first of all, I grant you the boon of death at your Will. As long as the Sun and Moon will exist on this earth, your fame will shine brightly in this Universe. Men and women will attain salvation simply by remembering your name. On your request to know the sacred story of slaying of Ravana' and My coronation of Ayodhya, before departing for Saket Dham, please wait for Maharishi Valmiki. The omniscient Sage Valmiki will come to your Ashram and tell you the tale of the future. That will bring you immense welfare. The Maharishi has already laid out my duties. I am merely following his instructions.'

Saying this, Lord Shri Ram stood up from His seat and asked Mahatma Shabari for permission to leave.

'O Mahatma, now I must quickly reach Kishkindha and meet Hanuman and Sugriva. I must alleviate Sugriva's suffering and then find Sita and bring her back. Now, give us permission to depart,' said Lord Ram.

Hearing this, Mahatma Shabari's eyes became wet and full of tears. With tearful eyes and loving voice, she chanted mantras in prayers for both brothers and bid them farewell. Dshev handed over Agni arrow to Lord Ram.

After Lord Ram and Lord Lakshman departed from her hut, Mahatma Shabari waited for Sage Valmiki to arrive at her Ashram. Shri Ram's meeting with Shri Hanuman at the Kishkindha mountain, His friendship with Sugreev, the killing of Bali and Sugreev's coronation, all this information continued to reach Mahatma Shabari.

Subsequently, the rainy season arrived and Shri Ram waited for the rainy season to end so He could begin search for Sita with the help oh Sugriva.

Days passed on thus, and one day to her surprise, she saw Maharishi Valmiki arriving at her hut. Mahatma Shabari saw the majestic, radiant Sage with his moon-like body wrapped in a silken loincloth, his long-matted hair covering the darkness of the world, standing at the door of her hut with beautiful smile. Mahatma Shabri immediately bowed down to the Sage and took him to her hut and made him sit on a high seat. She offered him delicious honey, berry fruits and water to drink.

The Sage became very happy and said, 'O Mahatma Shabari, you are auspicious in every way. You are the living embodiment of austerity and hard work. You are a woman of strong determination. You are blessed that your hut has been made extremely sacred by Lord Ram Himself. By attaining great virtue through hard work and penance in life, you have easily received the auspicious results of all the four Ashrams. Bhadre, you have presented an ideal of life for the people. Though I know that you have achieved everything in life and there is nothing left to achieve now, still, I ask you with great happiness, Shubhe, if you have any desire in your heart, please tell me.'

Mahatma Shabari said with folded hands, 'O Guru of my father and my grandfather, the divine form of God, your truthful words are eternal. Lord Ram Himself told me that you composed the story of His life even before

His birth and that you gave Him auspicious advice from time to time for him to follow.'

Then, the Sage said, 'O Mahatma, it is not appropriate to give me this credit. Lord Ram is an eternal incarnation and therefore His story is well known. His story of incarnation was narrated to me by Brahmrishi Narada and I merely poeticized it. O Bhadre, I know you want to go to Saket Dham as soon as possible. It is your curiosity and the Lord's wish that before you go to Vishnulok, I should tell you the story of Lord Ram's coronation in Ayodhya, the reign of Ram and his return to Vishnulok after taking Jal Samadhi so that Bhadre, you may know His subsequent auspicious story. You have already known the story up to Sugreev's coronation. Now, when the rainy season will end, Sugriva will send a group of monkeys in search of Sita. Lord Hanuman will go to Lanka to search for Her. Subsequently, Lord Rama with an army of bears and monkeys, will build a bridge at Rameshwaram and attack Lanka. Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana the king of Lanka, will surrender to Lord Ram. This battle will last for sixteen days. After defeating and killing Ravana and Kumbhakaran, and liberating the entire demon clan, Lord Ram will hand over the kingdom of Lanka to Vibhishana. Vibhishana will then honorably bring Sita to Lord Rama. Sita, the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi, will then emerge from the fire placing the imaged Sita in the fire. After Sita's emergence from the fire, Lord Ram accompanied with all his companions, will depart to Ayodhya by the Pushpak Vimana. En route, He will stop at Maharishi Bharadwaj's Ashram in Prayag, pay His respects to the Sage, and will take bath in the holy Ganges. He will depart then to Ayodhya with Maharishi Bharadwaj and Kurtaki. Shri Ram wishes that Maharishi Kurtaki with Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha, anoint him. You may not be there but your name will always be in the heart of the Lord. On arriving in Ayodhya, Lord Ram will embrace His brother Bharat and accept the kingdom of Ayodhya. Ram Rajya will be established which will last for thousands of years. After establishing Ram Rajya, when the time approaches for His return to Saket Dham, He will take Jal-Samadhi with his brothers handing over the kingdom of Ayodhya to his two sons, Luv and Kush. O Shubhe, as per Shri Ram's wish, I have given you a brief overview of Shri Ram's activities of near future. O Bhaktimati Shabari, your life was truly great, successful and devoted to the service of the Lord. Your amazing life story will live forever. You will

attain the status of the most precious devotee in all three eras. I bless that whoever remembers or sings your selfless devotion, he/she and his/her family will never be affected by any calamity. O Shubhe, whomsoever worships your idol daily, will have all his /her wishes fulfilled and his home will always be filled with happiness and prosperity. He/she will never be tormented by the tortures of Yama. Your devotees will always reside in heaven and if he/ she is reborn due to karma, his/her life will be blessed with eternal prosperity. The world will forever be indebted to your devotion to Lord Rama. O Mahatma, I bow to you.'

Hearing this prophetic tale, Mahatma Shabari's body and mind were lost in the remembrance of the Lord. Tears of love flowed from her eyes. Wetting the feet of Maharishi Valmiki with her tears, Mahatma Shabari humbly said, 'O Lord, all my wishes have now been fulfilled. Now, please allow me to go to Saket Dham.'

Maharishi Valmiki then lifted her from the ground, embraced her and said, 'Daughter, your heart has always been devoted to God. Even while living on this earth, you have remained in Saket Dham. Now, if you wish to give up this mortal body, you have my permission.'

Remembering the Lord in her heart, Mahatma Shabari then burnt her body to ashes with the fire of Yoga and departed for the Lord's abode. Maharishi Valmiki then offered her ashes to the Pampa lake with the chanting of mantras and returned to his Ashram.

## **The Coronation of Shri Ram**

After killing Ravana, conquering Lanka and handing over the throne of Lanka to Vibhishana, the Lord boarded the Pushpak Viman and proceeded towards Ayodhya with all His companions. Paying obeisance to all the great Sages along the way, He reached the Ashram of Maharishi Bharadwaj in Prayagraj where he duly praised the Sage and took bath in mother Ganga receiving her blessings. The Lord then, took Maharshi Bhardwaj and Maharishi Kurtaki (Shramana) with him on the plane and proceeded towards Shringaverpur.

Reaching Shringaverpur, Shri Ram directed the plane to land on the banks of the Ganges. As soon as Nishadraj heard of the Lord's arrival, he ran towards the banks of the Ganges overwhelmed with love. Approaching the Lord, he fell on His feet immersed in blissful trance. The Lord then, lifted him up and embraced him. At that very moment, the Lord was astonished to see a special community living in tents on the banks of the Ganges. Their leader was looking at the feet of the Lord with great devotion and hoping to get some instructions from Him.

The Lord immediately went to this colony and was surprised to recognize them as eunuchs of Ayodhya. These eunuchs had come with Bharat to this place to persuade Him to accept the kingdom of Ayodhya and not to go to the forest for 14 years. We all know that rejecting this request, Shri Ram gave Bharat His sandals and sent him back to Ayodhya. He promised all the residents of Ayodhya that He would return after 14 years of exile and ordeedg them to return to their respective homes. But why these eunuchs were still here? Why had not they returned back to Ayodhya?

The Lord immediately approached the head of the eunuch community. The eunuch chief immediately prostrated before the Lord. Tears of unceasing love flowed from his eyes. The Lord asked him himbly why he and his community did not return back to Ayodhya?

The head of the eunuch humbly replied, 'O Lord of mercy, You ordered all the residents of Ayodhya, men, women, boys, girls, old and elderly to

return back to Ayodhya, but did not address the eunuch community and did not give us any orders. Therefore, we understood that the Lord had commanded us to stay here and wait for His return from exile. Therefore, we have built temporary residence here to welcome You and were awaiting Your return from exile.'

Their sacrifice moved the Lord's eyes to tears. He immediately embraced the head of the Kinnar (eunich) community and greeted all the Kinnars with love. Overwhelmed with emotion, the Lord then granted them a boon.

The Lord said, 'O my devoted Kinnars, from today onwards no auspicious function can be successful unless the Kinnars are first honored.'

Due to this boon from the Lord, to this day every auspicious function is commenced only after honoring the Kinnars.

Lord Shri Ram continued, 'My dear devotees, now all of you must depart to Ayodhya. We will meet again there'.

With joy and happiness, all the Kinnars then departed for Ayodhya.

The Lord then ordered Shri Hanuman to proceed to Ayodhya to inform Bharat about His arrival. The Lord made Shringaverpur His resting place until Shri Hanuman returned.

Shri Hanuman met Bharat Ji and informed him about Shri Ram's return to Ayodhya. After informing Bharat, Shri Hanuman Ji returned back to Shringaverpur.

Lord Ram with all His companions including Nishadraj rode in the Pushpak Viman and then proceeded towards Ayodhya.

On reaching Ayodhya, Lord Ram was given a grand welcome. First of all, Lord Ram met Gurudev Maharishi Vashishtha by prostrating before him. Thereafter, he met all his brothers, mothers, administrative officials and the entire public. Maharishi Kurtaki bowed to Maharishi Vashishtha and worshipped his feet. Maharishi Vashishtha immediately embraced her and

ordered, 'What are you waiting for, Maharishi Kurtaki? Prepare immediately for Lord Ram's coronation.'

Under the directions of Maharshi Vashishta and Maharishi Kurtaki, chief minister Sumant invited all the Brahmins for Lord Ram's coronation and sent messengers to bring all the auspicious items. Maharishi Vashishta ordered a divine throne. Shri Ram and Sita bowed their heads at Gurudev's feet and sat on it. Maharishi Kurtaki then began chanting Vedic mantras along with all the Brahmins present. Gurudev Maharishi Vashishta first applied tilak to Lord Ram followed by Maharishi Kurtaki and all other dignitaries. Thus, with the chanting of Vedic mantras Lord Ram's coronation took place.

ॐ स्वस्ति न इन्द्रोवृद्धश्रवाः | स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ||

स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः | स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ||

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः |

**Om Svasti Na Indrovruddhashravaah |**

**Svasti Nah Pusha Vishvavedah ||**

**Svasti Nastarkshyo Arishtanemih |**

**Svasti No Bruhaspatirdadhatu ||**

**Om Shantih Shantih Shantih |**

After the coronation, Maharishi Kurtaki came to live in the Ashram of Maharishi Vashishta in Ayodhya. One day, Lord Ram went to Gurudev Vashishta's Ashram, specifically to meet Maharishi Kurtaki.

After paying obeisance to Gurudev, He began to praise Maharishi Kurtaki, showing respect to her.

The Lord said, 'O Shramana, I bow to your devotion. I am extremely pleased with you. Ask for a boon.'

Then Maharishi Kurtaki stood before the Lord with folded hands and said, 'O Lord, you imparted the knowledge of the new form of devotion (Nav-

Vidha Bhakti) to Mahatma Shabari. I am also eager to hear some wisdom from Your holy mouth. Therefore, take me under your protection and dispel my ignorance.'

The Lord then smiled and said, 'O Shramana, I will tell you some principles of religion in brief. Listen carefully. There is no body form in the Universe like the human body. This human body is the ladder to hell, heaven, salvation, bestowing knowledge, detachment and devotion. Even after assuming this sacred human body, those who are not immersed in devotion to God and remain attached to worldly pleasures, abandon the philosopher's stone and take pieces of glass in exchange. There is no sorrow in this world like poverty and no happiness like the company of Saints. O dear one, it is the nature of the holy persons to do charity with their mind, words, and body. Saints endure suffering for the welfare of others and never cause suffering to others. Merciful saints endure even great adversity for the benefit of others. O Sumukhi, the root of all diseases is ignorance. Rules, religion, good conduct, austerity, knowledge, sacrifices and charity are the medicines that bring happiness, peace, and ultimately salvation to humans. Devotion to God is the Sanjivani herb. Dispassion in the heart makes both mind and body happy.'

Hearing these words of wisdom from the Lord, Maharishi Kurtaki became absorbed in devotion to the Lord and entered into a meditative state. Her eyes closed. Her breathing slowed immensely and she then gave up her mortal body before the Lord.

Seeing this, the Lord immediately rose. He took Shramana's head on His lap and said lovingly, 'Oh dear, you will not be reborn again. You have found your place in the Brahmaloaka, a place rare even for Yogis.'

Lord Ram with Maharishi Vashishtha and other Ashram residents, personally performed the last rites of His great devotee Maharishi Kurtaki (Shramana) and returned to His palace.

## **Sahajo Bai, a Great Devotee of Lord Krishna**



## Introduction

Humans have been searching for peace, happiness, and joy for ages. They have been performing Yagnas, chanting God's name, doing all types of austerities, singing hymns, prayers, sermons and other rituals to attain peace, happiness, and joy, yet they remain unattained. What could possibly be the reason for this? Listen to this statement by the great poet Shri Avdresh Ji. Considering themselves religious, humans consider their duties simply reciting the Ramayana, the Gita, the Bhagavad Gita, other religious scriptures and begin to imagine attaining virtue. The truth is that until the teachings of these great books are put into practice, attaining peace, happiness, and joy is not only difficult but impossible. The great men and women who put them into practice have found joy. Goswami Tulsidas emphasized character, considering the horrors of time, place, and circumstances.

**कोऊ न काहु सुख-दुःखकर दाता | निज कृत कर्म भोग सब भ्राता ||**

**kou Na Kaahu Sukh-Duhkhakar Daata |  
Nij Krt Karm Bhog Sab Bhraata ||**

Everyone receives the fruits of their karma. No one is the giver of happiness or sorrow to anyone.

Everyone has to bear the fruits of their own actions. In ignorance, humans start blaming God for their sufferings. The question arises that why is the human being who is naturally happy, becomes dull and naturally sad? The only reason for this is that he/she has forgotten his/her duty.

Keeping an ideal in front, one has to embark on the path of his/her duty, move from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, but he/she does not do so because of getting engrossed in worldly pleasures. The desire of a human being should be to unite with his eternal luminous part. Only then the human birth in this world be meaningful. This will be possible only when we try to bring the human character of great men and great mothers into our conduct and follow their character carefully.

जो प्रबंध नहिं बुध आदरहीं | सो श्रम वाद बाल कवि करहीं ||  
कीरति भनिति भूति भलि सोई | सुरसरि सम सबकर हित होई ||  
जे गावहिं यह चरित संभारे | सो यहि ताल चतुर रखवारे ||

Jo Prabandh Nahin Budh Aadaraheen |  
So Shram Vaad Baal Kavi Karaheen ||  
Keerati Bhaniti Bhooti Bhali Soi |  
Surasari Sam Sabakar Hit Hoi ||  
Je Gaavahin Yah Charit Sambhaare |  
So Yahi Taal Chatur Rakhavaare ||

The primary objective of portraying Mata Sahajo Bai's character here is to present the past in the context of the present and to present divinity in a human perspective. Mata Sahajo Bai was neither married nor a sophisticated woman. She was a great ascetic. According to many thinkers, the story of Mata Sahajo Bai's life, her devotion towards her Guru and God, is very similar to that of Meera Bai's devotion to Lord Krishna. History books present Mata Sahajo Bai's story in a very brief form. This story presents relatively detailed outline of her life and character.

Mata Sahajo Bai was a Vaishya girl. Since ancient times, some scholars have considered spirituality to be reserved exclusively for the Brahmin caste. However, spiritualism is independent of caste, creed, sex and religion. Everyone has the right to develop spiritually themselves. The saying of 'Uttishtha Jagra't is for all living beings; it is not restricted by caste, creed, sex or religion. Mata Sahajo Bai, a Vaishya girl, rose as a devotee of the Guru and God. It is ironic that storytellers have remained mostly silent in describing these qualities of hers. Her multifaceted talent for public welfare remained unexplored.

Most of the devotees of the Lord have asked for something from the Lord. Even the great devotee Hanuman Ji asked Shri Ram:

नाथ शैल पर कपि पति रहई | सो सुग्रीव दास तव अहई ||  
तेहि संग नाथ मयत्री कीजै | दीन जान तेहि अभय करीजे ||

Naath Shail Par Kapi Pati Rahae |  
So Sugreev Daas Tav Ahae ||  
Tehin Sang Naath Mayatree Keeje |  
Deen Jaan Tehin Abhay Kareeje ||

Surely Hanuman Ji did not ask anything for himself, but did ask for his king. His request was certainly self-less, but it was still a request.

Now on the other hand, look at the character of Mata Sahajo Bai. When Lord Krishna offered her a boon, Mata Sahajo Bai asked nothing. She simply said, 'Lord, you have given me a Guru, haven't you? I do not want anything more.'

She desired nothing, yet she received everything. Throughout her life, she worshipped Gurudev and Lord Krishna and engaged herself in public welfare activities considering it God's work. Such a noble, patient, and steadfast devotee Mata Sahajo Bai, is the main heroine of this story. This story describes her qualities, actions, and nature of the embodiment of devotion. According to the dictionary, the word 'Sahajo' means a woman with a simple character. This name is meaningful for Mata Sahajo Bai. This story attempts to describe her fame, glory, and talent. The essence of this story is to present the deepest insights into the spiritual, philosophical, religious, social and political aspects of Mata Sahajo Bai in a simple and engaging manner. We pray to God that the readers may embody the character of Mata Sant Sahajo Bai in their life. This will certainly bring them happiness, peace, and joy.

## Saint Sahjo Bai - In the View of Literary Scholars

All Hindi literary scholars agree that Saint Sahjo Bai, like Mirabai, entered public life through her writings and charted the path to freedom for women. Unfortunately, the expected evaluation of her works has been hampered by the one-sided perspectives of critics and the patriarchal, feudal ideology. Acharya Hazari Prasad Dwivedi briefly mentions Sahjo Bai's devotion to her Guru, love for God, emotional ecstasy, and self-surrender, but he also fails to comprehensively describe her literary contributions. Dr. Ramkumar Verma, in his book 'A Critical History of Hindi Literature,' also briefly mentions the literature of Saint Charan Das and Mata Sahjo Bai. Dr. Jagdish Chaturvedi has acknowledged the fact that mainstream literature has largely ignored the identity, aspirations, desires, needs, experiences and high mental state of women saints like Mata Sahjo Bai. Unfortunately, the scholars of Hindi have not done justice to her literary contribution. All critics believe that Mata Sahajo Bai has attacked social evils as much as possible through her experiences and in her writings. Mata Sahajo Bai was fully aware of the social system of her time and opposed the invalid ideas prevalent then. Mata Sahajo Bai herself has shown in her writings that perhaps it was easy for Mirabai to survive in male dominated society because she was from the royal family and it was easy for her to take her own decisions, but it was very difficult for Sahajo Bai to be that independent because she was from a middle class Vaishya clan, and belonging to an orthodox Sanatan family. It was very difficult for her to get freedom from the social evils prevalent at that time. She has undoubtedly tried to give a message to Hindu Sanatan women to give up the dignity of caste and clan just like Mirabai in her writings.

चरनदास सतगुरु दियो, प्रेम पिलाया छान |  
सहजो मतवारे भये, तुरिया तत गलतान ||  
प्रेम दिवाने जो भये, जाति वरन गइ छूट |  
सहजो जग बौरा कहै, लोग गये सब फूट ||

**Charanadaas Sataguuo diyo, Prem Pilaaya Chhaan |  
Sahajo Matavaare Bhaye, Turiya Tat Galataan ||  
Prem Divaane Jo Bhaye, Jaati Varan Gai Chhoot |  
Sahajo Jag Baura Kahai, Log Gaye Sab Phoot ||**

I got Charandas as my true Guru who made me drink nectar. Sahajo became intoxicated with love to God. Those who become mad with love to God, lost their caste and creed. The world calls Sahajo mad. But all these people have gone astray.

Sahjo Bai has attacked the irony of man-woman relationship in a male-centric society and opposed the unequal division of labour between men and women in the family. Breaking the stereotypical image of women, she achieved Sainthood which was an impossible in the medieval society. At that time, this right was given only to men by the so-called Acharyas. She taught that apart from the traditional belief of attaining salvation for the women for example serving their husbands, the journey to salvation begins with Guru bhakti, Bhagwad bhakti and selfless social service. It would be appropriate to say that in her writings she has expressed freedom of women in their lives. This freedom gives independence, self-reliance and devotion to the Guru and God.

## Birth of Sdahjo Bai

Saint Sahajo Bai's father was a merchant and his name was Shri Hari Prasad Ji. The name of her mother was Smt. Anupi Devi. Originally, they were from the Marwar region of Rajasthan, but had settled in Parikshitpur, a town near Delhi to earn their living. Shri Hari Prasad Ji was a prominent dry fruit merchant of North India. He was blessed by Goddess Lakshmi and was from an affluent family. He was such a generous person that people used to compare his generosity with generous Karna. He had vowed to never let anyone go hungry within a five-mile radius of his home. It was the beginning of the eighteenth century when unfortunately, a severe famine struck the Marwar region of Rajasthan from where originally Shri Hari Prasad Ji belonged. That was indeed a great tragic and terrible time. Even today, the thought of that time brings goosebump. People were dying of hunger. Food and water were scarce. People were wandering here and there in search of shelter, but they could find neither shelter nor food. They searched the garbage bins hoping to find something to eat. But even there, they had to contest with dogs and cats. The whole area was filled with skeletons. Merchant Shri Hari Prasad organized a small team of relief workers and reached the Marwar region. He tried to visit every village in the Marwar region with his companions trying his best to provide food to all the poor. He also took his own food stock with him to this famine-struck area. His own food stock was on the verge of depletion, yet, without caring for himself and his family, he helped the poor as much as possible. It is said that if merchant Shri Hari Prasad and his team of relief workers had not provided this timely assistance, thousands would have died of hunger. It is said in scriptures that every good and bad time passes and this bad time also passed somehow. Merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji was a great generous and philanthropic man.

Sometimes, it is beyond belief to imagine that such a noble person can also suffer and be sad in his life. Merchant Shri Hari Prasad had reached old age, but God had not blessed him with any child. The grief of being childless tormented him deeply. One day, brooding over this dilemma merchant Shri Hari Prasad sat on the cushion of his shop in a very

depressed state. He was deep in thought when suddenly a voice said, 'Sir, please weigh 100 kilos of cashews and 100 kilos of walnuts.'

But Seth Ji was lost in some unknown thoughts. The merchant's words fell on deaf ears. This merchant Seth Dhanraj was an old friend of merchant Shri Hari Prasad. He came closer to his friend, shook him and said, 'What is the matter, friend? What deep thoughts are you lost in?'

It is said that in a state of grief, if a truly benevolent friend offers a few sympathetic words, they find a shoulder to lean on to lighten their burden. This is exactly what happened to the merchant Shri Hari Prasad. Seeing his best friend Seth Dhanraj standing in front of him and expressing such sympathetic words, the merchant Shri Hari Prasad burst into tears and said, 'Friend, you know very well. Goddess Lakshmi has given me everything, but she has left me childless. For what deeds of mine has Mother punished me like this? In this life as far as I can remember, I have not committed any sinful act that would displease Mother. I do not know about my previous life. Is there any way I can see the face of a child?'

Hearing these sad words from the mouth of merchant Shri Hari Prasad, Seth Dhanraj Ji said, 'Of course, friend. You have probably forgotten that your cousin Sant Charan Das Ji is a realized soul. Go to his Ashram and tell him your plight. He will surely guide you.'

'Yes, friend, I know, I certainly do. But Sant Charan Das Ji is a great ascetic saint. He has nothing to do with all these worldly things. He renounced worldly attachments at a young age,' said the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji.

'Friend, Saints have extremely compassionate and kind hearted persons. Their lives are dedicated to guiding us, the worldly people. Whether the problem is worldly or spiritual, they will surely have a solution. Friend, do not hesitate and place your heart at the Saint's feet,' Seth Dhanraj Ji said.

Seth Dhanraj's words had a deep impact on the heart of the merchant Shri Hari Prasad and he decided to go to Delhi with his wife Smt. Anupi Devi

to the Ashram of his cousin Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji for guidance.

One day seeing an auspicious time, he reached Delhi with his wife Smt. Anupi Devi in the Ashram of Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji.

When they entered the Delhi Ashram of Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji, they were mesmerized by its grandeur. Just entering the Ashram calmed their restless mind. The natural environment of the Ashram was a sight to behold. They felt as if God had bestowed all the natural beauty upon Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji's Ashram. Their eyes never tired of witnessing the beauty. It seemed as if the connection between humanity and nature had ended within the Saint's Ashram. The chirping of birds, the banks of the Yamuna River, the gurgling sound of the river, the beautiful tall trees, the fragrant flowers and the soft chanting of mantras by the disciples were simply breathtaking. Upon reaching the Ashram's entrance, a disciple of Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji recognized them, Shri Hari Das Ji and his wife Smt. Anupi Devi Ji. He immediately ran towards them, touched their feet and said, "Uncle, auntie, you have not sent any news of your arrival. Is everything alright?"

The merchant Shri Hari Das Ji said to this disciple of Sant Charan Das Ji, 'Yes, son Chhitramal, everything is fine.'

This disciple of Sant Ji, Chhitramal was none other than his own nephew.

'How is Sant Ji?' the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji asked.

'Everything is fine uncle. Both of you are tired from the journey. Wash your hands and face, have a snack and rest. I will take you and Kaki to see Sant Ji later. He will be very happy to see you,' Chhitramal replied.

The Ashram's atmosphere had quickly dispelled the fatigue of their journey, yet to cheer Chhitramal up, he and Mrs. Anupi Devi went with him to the guest house. They had just finished washing their hands and feet and sat down when Chhitramal entered with a basket of fruit. The merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Mrs. Anupi Devi ate the fruit and laid

down on the cot to rest. They were very tired and had already eaten, so their matured bodies fell into a semi-conscious state.

When merchant Shri Hari Prasad was in semiconscious state, he saw a very beautiful girl dressed as a brahmacharini trying to speak to him.

What are you saying, daughter? Speak clearly. I do not understand anything,' said the merchant Shri Hari Prasad.

'I have been waiting for you for so long, Baba. Why did you take so long to come?' These sweet words echoed through the merchant Shri Hari Prasad.

He immediately opened his eyes in shock. He told his wife Mrs. Anupi Devi about this dream and considering it a very auspicious omen, began to wait for Chitramal to arrive who would introduce him to the saint.

Shortly after, they saw that Saint Charan Das Ji himself was approaching towards them accompanied by Chhitramal. The couple immediately rose to welcome him. They felt an urge to touch his feet, but to their surprise, the Saint bowed down and touched their feet.

'Brother and sister-in-law, you have blessed us after a long time. I hope all is well,' the Saint's words echoed.

The husband and wife, the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Mrs. Anupi Devi were bewildered. They had never imagined even in their wildest dreams that the Saint would meet them with such love and touch their feet. The accomplished Saint Shri Charan Das Ji at a very high level of spritualism and we are ordinary people. Though no doubt, he was certainly older in age than the Saint, but the reason for respect was not age but high level of spritualism. The Saint's humility brought tears to their eyes. They began to cry and clung to their brother.

'Brother and sister-in-law, please rest for a while. Chhitramal will bring you to the temple during the evening prayer time and we will meet there again,' the Saint said and left.

A few days passed in this manner at the Ashram. Merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji would see the Saint every morning and evening and they would talk on various topics but he was unable to find the opportunity to open his heart.

A week had passed since the merchant Shri Hari Prasad had come to the Saint's Ashram, he could not muster the courage to express his heart's pain to the Saint. The Saint was always surrounded by disciples and visitors, that made difficult for him to express his heart's feelings to the Saint. The prospect of meeting the Saint in private seemed elusive. He decided to speak to Chhitramal who would surely suggest a solution. While he was thinking this, he saw Chhitramal approaching him. He was in a very happy mood. He touched uncle and Kaki's feet and said, 'The Saint is waiting for you on the banks of the Yamuna River near the Ashram gate. Come there whenever you have time.'

Tears welled up in the eyes of the merchant Shri Hari Prasad. The Saint's nature was so humble that he had said that he might come to meet him whenever he had time.

Immediately, Shri Hari Prasad with his wife and Chhitramal set off to meet the Saint. The merchant Shri Hari Prasad approached the Saint who was sitting quietly on the banks of the Yamuna River.

Again, the same courtesy. The Saint stood up and began to touch the feet of the merchant Shri Hari Prasad. Shri Hari Prasad thought that it was a grave sin that he might allow a Saint to touch the feet of an ordinary man. Immediately, Shri Hari Prasad held the Saint's hand. He did not allow his or his wife's feet to be touched by the Saint.

Everyone sat down then on the seat on the Yamuna River. The Saint began speaking in a low voice, 'Brother and sister-in-law, Mirabai herself is incarnating in your home. Just go to Vrindavan and seek the blessings of Banke Bihari.'

The merchant Shri Hari Prasad had thought in his heart that he would pray to the Saint for a child, but he had no idea about the omniscient Saint. He

became annoyed at his own foolishness. He had spent his life and reached adulthood, yet he still could not grasp the Saint's mind. The Saints are omniscient. There is no need to say anything to them. Just by meeting and looking at the person, they understand the devotee's heart's pain and immediately bless the devotee.

Neither the merchant Shri Hari Prasad nor Mrs. Anupi Devi uttered a single word. They simply stared at the Saint like a sparrow staring at the Moon. Then, after a moment the Saint's words broke their concentration.

The Saint said, 'Brother and sister-in-law, please give me permission to leave now. My time for meditation has begun. Both of you may continue to accept the hospitality of the Ashram for as long as you may wish. Whenever you may wish, please proceed to Vrindavan to have Darshan of Banke Bihari.'

Hearing these loving words of the Saint, the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji was overwhelmed. He took the Saint's hands in his hands and said, 'O brother, please let me go today itself. I am extremely anxious to have Darshan of Banke Bihari Ji.'

'As you wish brother and sister-in-law,' saying this, the Saint looked lovingly at the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Mrs. Anupi Devi Ji and left.

Chhitramal bid them farewell and made all the arrangements for their trip to Vrindavan.

Merchant Shri Hari Prasad and Smt Anupi Devi arrived in Vrindavan safely. Chhitramal informed the manager of the Shri Krishna Dharamshala who was a devotee of Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji about the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji through a letter. The manager of Dharamshala's heart was filled with joy to hear that the Saint's brother was visiting his Dharamshala. He lovingly welcomed Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Smt. Anupi Devi Ji and made all the arrangements for their comfortable stay.

Merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji began to contemplate the glory of Lord Banke Bihari. He remembered his father's words that no one built the temple of Lord Banke Bihari Ji. This idol of Lord Bihari Ji was manifested through the musical practice of Saint Swami Haridas Ji. His father had told him that the idol of Shri Banke Bihari Ji was not just an idol but the actual presence of Lord Krishna and Shri Mata Radha Rani. Thousands of miracles happened here every day. The eyes alone without devotion to the Lord and Mata Radha Rani were not enough to see Him. To see Him, one must also have a feeling of love. He remembered his father's words, 'Son, the appearance of Shri Banke Bihari Ji was truly amazing. Accepting Saint Swami Haridas Ji's heartfelt devotion, Lord Krishna appeared with Mother Radha Rani.'

His father's words echoed in his ears. His father had further said, 'O Son, Saint Swami Haridas Ji was none other than the Guru of the music maestro Tansen and the music maestro Baiju Bawra. Saint Swami Haridas Ji was born on Radha Ashtami. He was the incarnation of Lalita Sakhi. Lalita Sakhi was Radha Rani's most beloved friend. He had a keen interest in meditation and scriptures since childhood. He had immense love for Lord Krishna. Young Haridas Ji shunned worldly pleasures and focused on meditation. He was married to Srimati Harimati in due course, but he was completely different. He had no attachment to worldly pleasures. Srimati Harimati Ji quickly realized that her husband's love for the Lord was incomparable. Time passed on and the day came when Haridas Ji set out for Vrindavan. At that time, Vrindavan was a dense forest. He chose a secluded place for his residence now known as Nidhivan. He had a deep passion for music. He was an expert in music. He dedicated his music to the Lord. With his music, he would constantly depict the Lord's Raas Leela and Vihars with joy. His practice consisted of composing songs in praise of the Lord and singing them with his music. This brought him the joy of experiencing the closeness to the Lord. He chose Kunj a secluded and dense forest area in Nidhivan as the gateway to Nirvana and spent most of his time there in a meditative state. He continued singing, meditating and chanting the name of Lord Krishna in Nidhivan, the ocean of eternal bliss. When Swami Haridas Ji would entice Lord Banke Bihari Ji through musical practice, every branch of Nidhivan would sway in devotion and love for Mata Radha and Lord Krishna. A

wondrous light would spread throughout Nidhivan. Swami Haridas was enamored of Lord Krishna. The way he described His forms, it seemed as if he was seeing Banke Bihari Ji himself. The eyes of ordinary people could see nothing but a light.

One day, the people of Vrindavan pleaded with him, 'O Swami Ji Maharaj, please make it possible for us also to have Darshan of Lord Banke Bihari Ji.'

Hearing their pitiful cries and love in their hearts to have Darshan of the Lord, Swami Ji prayed to the Lord.

Swamiji Maharaj said to Lord Shri Krishna, 'O Lord, everyone wants to see the same form of You as I see. O Lord, please manifest so that everyone can see You and make their lives successful.'

Swami Haridas Ji began to sing:

**भाई री सहज जोरी प्रकट भई, जु रंग की गौर स्याम घन दामिनी जैसे |  
प्रथम था हुती अब हूं आगे हूं रहि था न टरि था तैसे ||**

**अंग अंग की उजकाई सुघराई चतुराई सुंदरता ऐसे |  
श्री हरिदास के स्वामी श्यामा पुंज बिहारी सम वैसे वैसे ||**

**Bhaee Ree Sahaj Joree Prakat Bhai,  
Jurang Kee Gaur Syaam Ghan Daaminee Jaise |  
Pratham Tha Hutee Ab hoon Aage,  
Hoon Rahi Tha Na Tari Tha Taise ||**

**Ang Ang Kee Ujakaee Sugharaee Chaturaee Sundarata Aise |  
Shri Haridas Ke Swami Shyam Punj Bihaari Sam Vaise Vaise ||**

God's heart is as compassionate and merciful as butter. Therefore, at Swamiji's request Krishna and Radha Rani agreed to appear before them. However, ordinary people were unable to bear Radha Rani's brilliance.

Swami Ji prayed, 'O Lord, please do something so that ordinary men and women can also have Your darshan.'

Lord Krishna honoured request of Swami Ji. Radha and Krishna were united. Lord Krishna absorbed Mother Radha's brilliance within Himself. He appeared in the form of Banke Bihari Ji, which is a united form of Lord Krishna and Mata Radha Rani. Therefore, having Darshan of Shri Banke Bihari Ji is like seeing the divine pair of Mata Radha and Lord Krishna. Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Mrs Anupree Devi Ji were filled with joy at the thought of having Darshan of Lord Krishna and Mother Radha Rani in the form of Shri Banke Bihari.

After completing their morning routine and purifying themselves with a bath, the couple went to visit the Banke Bihari Temple. The beautiful image of Lord Krishna playing His flute captivated them both. The husband and wife were ecstatic and prostrated saying, 'O Lord, protect us, protect us!'

Later, they sat down in the temple courtyard. The sound of 'Hey Govind, Hey Radhe' flowed from their hearts. A few lines of a hymn burst forth from their poetic hearts.

**राधे कृष्णा राधे कृष्णा, कृष्णा कृष्णा राधे राधे |**

**राधे श्याम राधे श्यामा, श्याम श्यामा राधे राधे ||**

**Radhe Krishna Radhe Krishna, Krishna Krishna Radhe Radhe |  
Radhe Shyam Radhe Shyama, Shyam Shyama Radhe Radhe ||**

Suddenly, Shri Hari Prasad went into a trance. The same beautiful girl who had appeared in his dreams at the Ashram of Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji, began appearing to him here as well. The same image, the same beautiful words echoed through the eyes of the merchant.

He heard a beautiful voice of a girl, 'I have been waiting for you for so long, Baba. Why did you take so long to come?'

Regaining consciousness, he narrated his dream to his wife. They bowed to the Lord, and exited the temple.

After having Darshan of the Lord Krishna and the mother Radha, they returned to their residence, Parikshitpur.

It had been almost a year since they had visited Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji and Lord Banke Bihari's temple in Vrindavan. It was an auspicious day of the Shukla Paksha (full moon) of the month of Ashadha (July 25, 1725), Vikram Samvat 1782. The autumn was about to spread its wings. High humid rainy season was gone. The month of Shravan was about to begin. At this very moment, Mrs Anupi Devi began experiencing labor pains. The midwife was immediately called.

'A girl has been born, Shri Hari Prasad ji,' the midwife's sweet words distracted Shri Hari Prasad ji.

It was as if the merchant had finally gotten his wish. He remembered the beautiful girl he had seen in his dreams at the Ashram of Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das ji and the Banke Bihari's temple. He remembered the words of Sant Shiromani Ji, 'A daughter like Meera Bai will come to your home, brother.'

His heart was filled with joy. He opened his treasure to gift all the poor. The sweets were distributed.

On the eleventh day of the girl's birth, the priest was called for the naming ceremony. The priest named the girl 'Sahjo.' Sahjo means simple, easy-going, and very kind girl by nature.

## Childhood and Initiation By Guru

Slowly, slowly, Sahajo was growing up. Her father, Shri Hari Prasad Ji and her mother Smt Anupi Devi, both considered Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji as their spiritual Guru. After Sahajo's birth, Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji would occasionally visit Parikshitpur from Delhi to accept the hospitality of Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Smt Anupi Devi.

Once, when Sahajo was three years old, the Saint made a visit to the home of Shri Hari Prasad Ji. The Saint immediately realized through his divine vision that this girl was an ardent devotee of Lord Shri Krishna. At her tender age, the Saint taught Sahajo some mantras. Sahajo's sharp intellect instantly memorized the mantras. Whenever Sant Shiromani was engrossed in meditation, Sahajo would sit with him and repeat his postures. The Saint had a routine that whenever he would sit down to meditate, he would place a stone statue of Lord Krishna (Bal Gopal Thakur Ji) that he used to carry with him.

Three-year-old Sahajo asked him, 'Uncle, my mother keeps the statue of Lord Krishna in the temple. Why do you carry it with you during your travels? Why do you keep this statue in front of you whenever you are engrossed in meditation?'

Saint Shiromani Charandas Ji lifted the girl in his lap and said sweetly, 'Daughter, you surely feel that your parents are always there to protect you. Now my parents have gone to the abode of Lord Krishna. Who will protect me? This Lord Krishna in the form of an idol always protects me. That is why I always keep Him close to me.'

The innocent girl Sahajo did not understand the meaning of the Saint's profound words and asked again, 'Uncle, why are your parents have gone to the abode of Lord Krishna? Why do not they take care of you? Please arrange for me to meet them. I will definitely tell them to take care of you and protect you. It is their duty.'

Saint Shiromani Charan Das Ji smiled and said in loving words, 'Dear daughter, my parents are no longer alive in this world. They have gone to live with the God. Now that they are no longer alive, how can I arrange for your reunion with them?'

Sahjo Bai, a girl with a sharp intellect did not let the Saint off so easily. She asked another question.

Sahjo asked, 'Uncle, why did not you stop them from going to Lord Krishna? Why did not you tell them who would protect you?'

Now Saint Shiromani Ji became serious and said, 'Daughter, you are still very young to understand all this. You may not understand the meaning of my words at this young age. But understand that no one can escape death. Anyone born in this world will have to leave one day. Now, when and how they will leave is determined by their actions. I was helpless. I could do nothing.'

In response, the girl Sahajo said, 'Uncle, will my parents also leave me one day?'

The saint said seriously, 'Yes, daughter, this is the law of nature.'

The girl, Sahajo also then became serious and said, 'Then uncle, please give me an idol of Lord Krishna too. He alone can protect me after my parents are gone.'

Saint Shiromani then said, 'Of course, daughter. You can keep my own Bal Gopal. Always keep Him with you. Remember, He gets hungry in the morning. Do not forget to give Him some food as soon as you get up in the mornung. I will pray to Krishna Kanhaiya to always protect you.'

Saying this, he handed Bal Gopal Thakur Ji to the girl Sahajo. The girl, Sahajo took the Bal Gopal but then she realised that she had taken uncle's Bal Gopal. Who would protect him now? So, she again said to the Saint, 'No, Uncle, I cannot take your Bal Gopal. If I take your Bal Gopal, who will protect you?'

Hearing the words and concern of Sahajo, the Saint smiled and took back Bal Thakur Ji from her hands and remembered his Gurudev Lord Sukadev. Immediately one Bal Gopal turned into two Bal Gopals. Then giving one Bal Gopal to the girl Sahjo, he said, 'Look, daughter, God has manifested in two forms. Now, one Bal Gopal will protect you and the other will protect me. Are you happy now?'

The girl Sahjo's joy knew no bounds. She fell madly in love with this Bal Gopal. She became the embodiment of patience, sacrifice, dedication, and modesty. She immediately ran to her mother Shrimati Anupi Devi and showing her the idol of Lord Krishna said, 'Look mother, what has uncle given to me? He has given me Lord Krishna. Now, this idol will protect me forever, even after you and my father have gone to God.'

Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji left for his Ashram to Delhi the very next day but he left a unique gift for the girl Sahjo Bai. The young girl Sahajo became so attached to this idol of Lord Krishna that she always kept it with her while getting up, sitting, sleeping, or eating. For the young girl, this idol of Lord Krishna was now her soul. As soon as she woke up in the morning, she would offer food to Bal Gopal, offering Him laddus as prasad. As the day progressed, she would bathe Him, wash Him, dress Him in new clothes, feed Him, and so on. The time that other girls of her age would spend playing with dolls, the young girl Sahajo spent with her Bal Gopal. Time slowly passed on. Sahajo Bai must have been around five years old now. It was a rainy season. One day, the wind was blowing quite strongly. Along with the wind, there were occasional splashes of rain. It was time to stay home and relax safely. But for some unknown reason, young Sahjo thought of something and without bothering to inform her parents, went for a walk to a pond near their home. As always, Bal Gopal was with her. A young shepherd boy had brought his cows to the pond to drink water. The cows were drinking water and he was standing on the bank watching them. Suddenly, due to the slippery mud created by the rain on the pond's bank, he slipped and fell into it. Unfortunately, the child did not know swimming. The drowning child apparently called for help which young Sahjo heard. Immediately, young Sahjo rushed to the the bank of the pond and with great force threw her young Gopal Thakur Ji into the pond.

She began shouting, 'O Thakur Ji, you protect my uncle, you protect my parents, please protect this young cowherd too.'

In a loud voice, she began calling out to the villagers for help. A crowd of villagers gathered in no time. They wanted to help the child but they were unable to see him in that deep and vast pond? Just then, a miracle happened. The wind turned into a storm. Tall waves began to rise in the pond. Those very waves swept the child and Bal Gopal Thakur Ji onto the shore. The villagers tried to revive the child. Within a short while, the child stood up as if nothing had happened and asked, 'Where is that boy with peacock feathers who pushed me from the bottom of the pond to the shore?'

All the villagers stared at his face in astonishment. But it did not take long for Sahjo to understand. The girl immediately ran toward Bal Gopal. She embraced Him in gratitude. Tears flowed from her eyes and a poem flowed from her mouth.

हम बालक तुम माय हमारी | पल पल मांहि करो रखवारी ||  
निस दिन गोदी ही में राखो | इत वित बचन चितावन भाखो ||  
विषै ओर जान नहीं देवो | धुर धुर जाऊं तो गहि गहि लेवो ||  
मैं अनजान कुछ नहीं जानूं | बुरी भली को कुछ नहीं पहिचानूं ||  
जैसी तैसे तुमहीं चीन्हेव | गुरु हैं ध्यान खेलौना दीनहेव ||  
तुम्हरी रच्छा से ही जीवें | नाम तुम्हारो इमरत पीवें ||  
दिष्टि तिहारो ऊपर मोरे | सदा रहूँ मैं सरने तेरे ||  
मारो झिडको तौ नहीं जाऊं | सरक सरक तुमहीं पाई आऊं ||

Ham Baalak Tum Maay Hamaaree |  
Pal Pal Maanhi Karo Rakhavaaree ||  
Nis Din Godee Hee Mein Raakho |  
It Vit Bachan Chitaavan Bhaakho ||  
Vishai Or Jaan Nahin Devo |  
Dhur Dhur Jaoon To Gahi Gahi Levo ||

Main Anajaan Kuchh Nahin Jaanoon |  
Buree Bhalee Ko Kuchh Nahin Pahichaanoon ||  
Jaisee Taise Tumaheen Cheenhev |  
Guru Hain Dhyaan Khelauna Deenahev ||  
Tumharee Rachchha Se Hee Jeeven |  
Naam Tumhaaro Imarat Peeven ||  
Dishti Tihaaro Oopar More |  
Sada Ragoon Main Sarane Tere ||  
Maaro Jhidako Tau Nahin Jaon |  
Sarak Sarak Tumaheen Pai Aaon ||

*We are children, you are our mother. Take care of us every moment. Keep us in your lap day and night. Continue to advice us. Keep us protected from poison of the world. If I drift away, hold me tight. I am ignorant and know nothing. I do not recognize good and bad. Guru gave me this idol after meditation. We live only due to your protection. Your name is the nectar. Continue to keep an eye on me. I will always remain at your feet. Even if you try to shake me, I will not go away. I will come to you again and again.*

Sahjo's father also heard his daughter's cries for help. Fearing something untoward, both parents ran towards the pond remembering their spiritual Guru Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji in their hearts. Upon reaching the pond, they were astonished by the scene. All the villagers began touching the feet of Girl Sahjo. Everyone believed that this was a miracle made possible by Bal Gopal's devotion to her. Unaware of all this, the frightened girl Sahjo continued to weep and returned home with her parents. The news of Girl Sahjo's devotion to Bal Gopal spread not only in the village but also in the surrounding areas after this.

Time passed on. Sahjo turned eleven. This was a time when child marriages were still prevalent in Rajasthan. The father found a suitable groom for his beautiful and intelligent daughter Sahajo and wedding ceremony preparations began. The groom, Raja, the son of one of their friends was twelve years old. Sahjo's father Shri Hari Prasad personally travelled to Delhi to invite Saint Charan Das Ji Maharaj to the wedding at his Ashram. He urged Saint to attend the wedding to bless her. The saint

gladly accepted the invitation and arrived on time. He saw Sahjo and blessed her. He knew that Sahjo was born for spirituality, not for worldly pursuits. However, he remained silent at that moment. The divine play is strange. On the evening of the wedding day, when the wedding procession was moving on, it is said that for some reason the mare spooked. The groom fell down from the mare and struck his head on a tree. He died on the spot. Everyone was lamenting on this sad unfortunate happening. The joys of the wedding were replaced by mourning. The groom's father approached Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji. Weeping, he grasped his feet and said, 'O Saint Shiromani Maharaj, you are a realized soul. You are our Sadguru. Sahjo is like your own daughter. She is your cousin's daughter. How could such a tragedy happen to her in your presence? Saint, please bring my son back to life.'

Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji's heart melted. He said, 'Giving him life completely is beyond my power. Only God can do that. Yes, I can certainly allow his soul to enter his body for a short time. If his soul accepts the body and wants to live, I can pray to Gurudev Bhagwan Shri Suk Maharaj to giving him life. He is the only one who can make it possible.'

It was as if a drowning man had found a straw to hold on to. He grabbed the Saint's feet and said, 'O Saint, please do so. We love our son very much and he also loves us very much. He will surely want to live.'

Using the power of Yoga, Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji allowed to enter his soul into his dead body. The child seemed to awaken from sleep. Upon rising, he touched the feet of Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji and said, 'O revered Saint Ji, you are omniscient. You know everything. I have been a devotee of you and Sahajo for many past lives. Sahajo gave me salvation on the pretext of this marriage. Why do you want to put me back in these worldly bonds?'

Everyone was stunned. Guru Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji then asked the groom's father, 'What do you want?'

The father held Saint Ji's feet and said, 'Saint Ji, please forgive us. We are ignorant people. This son of ours has salvaged all our generations. Lord, whatever our son desires, please do so'.

The boy once again touched the Saint Ji's feet and asked for permission to leave. The Saint Ji blessed him.

The Saint Ji said to the father of groom, 'Now, perform his last rites with joy in your heart. Everyone should go to their homes happily. Today you have met a Yogi.'

Everyone returned home. Then the Saint said to Sahajo:

**चलना है रहना नहीं चलना विश्वाबीस |**

**सहजो तनिक सुहाग पर कहाँ गुठावड़ शीश ||**

**Chalana Hai Rahana Nahin Chalana Vishvaabeas |  
Sahajo Tanik Suhaag Par Kahaan Guthaavai Sheesh ||**

'Sahjo, you are born to worship God, not to lead a family life.'

Upon hearing this, Sahjo grabbed the feet of Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji. She said to Saint uncle, 'Take me under your protection, Uncle. Please accept me as your disciple.'

Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Smt Anupi Devi Ji also requested Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji to accept their daughter as his disciple. Shri Charan Das Ji then allowed Sahjo to accompany him to Delhi to his Ashram. Mother Smt Anupi Devi felt a desire to spend a few days with her daughter at the Delhi Ashram. Knowing Anupi Devi's inner state of mind, the omniscient Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji immediately said to her, 'Sister-in-law, what are you waiting for? Make arrangements to accompany Sahjo to Delhi as soon as possible. Accept the hospitality of the Ashram for as long as you wish.'

Then, after taking permission from Shri Hari Prasad Ji, the three people, Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji, mother Sm. Anupree Devi Ji and 11-year-old girl Sahajo left for Delhi to the Saint Ji's Ashram.

## **Guru - Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji**

Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji was the cousin of the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji. His maternal uncle Shri Seth Muralidhar Ji was a prominent businessman from Alwar belonging to an elite family. He was a great devotee of Lord Krishna with a saintly nature and a vow of renunciation. His wife Smt Kunji Devi was a goddess of purity, tolerance, and humility. In his childhood, the merchant Shri Hari Prasad Ji's father had told him that Lord Krishna, impressed by the devotion of his aunt Smt Kunji Devi had appeared to her in her dream and blessed her to have a saintly soul as her son. In due course, a very bright son was born to them in 1706 whom they named 'Ranjit'. Later, after receiving initiation from the Guru, his name became Shri Charan Das. This is written by Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji himself.

**डेहरे में मेरा जनम नाम रणजीत पिछानो |**

**मुरली को सुत जान जात दूसर पहिचानो ||**

**Dehare Mein Mera Janam Naam Ranajeet Pichhaano |  
Muralee Ko Sut Jaan Jaat Dhoosar Pahichaano ||**

*I was born in Dehnan and my birth name was Ranjit. My father's name was Murali and Vaishya by caste.*

Child Ranjit was extremely talented. He learned to speak and walk by the age of one. Even at this young age, when his mother Smt Kunji Devi worshipped Lord Krishna, Ranjit would immediately rush to the home temple upon hearing the sound of the bell in prayer of the Lord and mother Goddess and participate fully in the worship. Such was Ranjit's love for Lord Krishna and Goddess.

Scholars have given the genealogy of eight generations of his family as follows: Saint Shiromani Shri (Ranjit) Charan Das's father was Shri Muralidhar. Shri Muralidhar's father was Shri Pragdas. Shri Pragdas's father was Shri Jagan Das. Shri Jagan Das's father was Shri Lahad Das.

Shri Lahad Das's father was Shri Giridhar Das. Shri Giridhar's father was Shri Chatur Das and Shri Chatur Das's father was Shri Shobhandas. Pleased with Shri Shobhandas's penance, God himself blessed him with prosperity and wealth. Sant Charan Das writes about this in his devotional poetry:

भवन तिहारे में ही आऊँ | कलियुग माहीं भक्ति चलाऊँ ||  
तो कुल माही भक्ति चलेगी | आठवीं पीढ़ी जाय फलेगी ||

Bhavan Tihaare Main Hee Aaon |  
Kaliyug Maaheen Bhakti Chalaon ||  
To kul Maahee Bhakti Chalegee |  
Aathaveen Peedhee Jaay Phalegee ||

*God blessed him by saying that He will be born in his house. He will propagate devotion in Kaliyuga. Devotion will continue in the entire family. It will bear fruit in the eighth generation.*

Even at the young age of five, Ranjit's tongue was filled with the chanting of Rama's name. One day, at this age, while immersed in the chanting of Rama's name, he met an ascetic. The ascetic lovingly took him in his lap under a mango tree and gave him two sweets. Saint Charan Das Ji writes:

कृपा प्यार बहुते ही किये | पुचकारे दो पेड़े दिये ||  
बहुरि कही तोहि सिषहम किन्हा | हूज्यों संत यही वर दीन्हा ||  
भव सागर को खेवट हवै है | वहु जग जीवन पार लंघौ है ||

Kripaa Pyaar Bahut Hi Kiye,  
Puchakaare Do Pede Diye.  
Bahuri Kahee Tohi Sishham Kinhaa,  
Hujyon Sant Yahee Var Deenaa.  
Bhav Saagar Ko Khevat Havain Hai,  
Vahu Jag Jeevan Paar Langhyo Hai.

*He loved me with kindness and gave me two sweet balls to eat. He blessed me again and again. He blessed saying that 'You will become a Saint. You will help people in their salvation and croosing this Bhav-Sagar (troubles of the world).'*

Ranjit's father was always deeply engrossed in devotion to the Lord. He would often go into the forest and meditate in solitude. To protect him from wild animals, a bodyguard was appointed by the family members who would accompy him to the forest and bring him home safely in the evenings. One day, while his father was meditating in the solitude of the forest, his bodyguard who was sitting a short distance away, fell asleep. Meanwhile, his father suddenly disappeared. No one knew where he had disappeared.

His father's disappearance was not the end of the troubles looming over the family but rather the beginning. Three months later, his grandparents also passed away. His mother was left helpless. She faced a bleak future. She was at a loss for what to do. Finally, she decided to return to her maternal home in Delhi. His maternal grandfather Shri Bhikhari Das was an official in the Delhi royal court. He wanted Ranjit to study Arabic and Persian. As was the custom of that time, he was sent to school in his sixth year. The Maulvi teacher tried many times to generate interest in the studies, but to no avail. His patience gave up. The Maulvi even scolded him, but all proved futile.

In this context, Ranjit said directing the teacher.

आल जाल तू क्या पढ़ावे | कृष्ण नाम लिख क्यों न सिखावे ||  
जो तुम हरि की भक्ति पढ़ाओं | तो मोकु तुम फेर बुलाओ ||

Aal Jaal Tu Kya Padhaave |  
Krishn Naam Likh Kyon Na Sikhaave ||  
Jo Tum Hari Ki Bhakti Padhaon |  
To Moku Tum Phir Bulao ||

*Why do you teach me non-sense? Why do not you teach me the name of Krishna? If you teach me the devotion of Hari, then call me back.*

The Maulvi, following his maternal grandfather's advice and due to his own language constraints, attempted to teach him Urdu, but he dismissed Urdu as useless language and asked him to teach devotion to Krishna or Hari. Nana Ji tried that the child should learn the education of that time and sent him to the Maulana for education again. The Maulvi tried again for eight months but it had no effect on him. He then composed a verse and said to the Maulvi:

**हमें आज से पढ़ना नाँही | जिकर ने होय फिकर के मांही ||  
सुनि मुल्ला हैरत में आया | इस लड़के पर रब की छाया ||**

**Hamen Aaj Se Padhana Naanhee |  
Jikar Ne Hoy Phikar Ke Maanhee ||  
Suni Mullah Hairat Mein Aaya |  
Is Ladake Par Rab Ki Chhaaya ||**

*I will not study from today. Why I should worry? Hearing this, the Mullah was surprised and thought that this child has the God's blessings on him.*

Though Ranjit left school but he was still deeply moved by the kindness of his grandfather. He felt that both his grandfather and grandmother were unhappy because he was unable to study. He expressed this sentiment thus:

**सोचि सोचि मन माँही ठानी | दुःखी होयेंगे नाना नानी ||  
कैसे मिठू उनका कीया | ताते पढ़ने में मन दीया ||**

**Sochi Sochi Man Maanhee Thaanee |  
Duhkhee Hoyenge Naana Naanee ||  
Kaise Mithoo Unaka Keeya |  
Taate Padhane Mein Man Deeya ||**

*After thinking seriously, I decided in my mind that my grandparents would be sad. How can I please them? I tried to devote my mind to studies.*

While young Ranjit was certainly grateful to his maternal grandfather and grandmother, he also harbored a deep desire to meet his true Guru and Lord Krishna. The pain of separation from his true Guru made him increasingly restless. He used to wander the forests in search of his true Guru. Shri Charan Das Ji himself described this state.

**ऐसी विरह अग्नि तन लागी | गई भूख और निद्रा भागी ||  
सतगुरु कूँ ढूँढन ही लागे | ढूँढे सब मत पंथ उदासी ||**

**Aisee Virah Agni Tan Laagee |  
Gae Bhookh Aur Nidra Bhaagee ||  
Sataguru Koon Dhoondhan Hee Laage |  
Dhoondhe Sab Mat Panth Udaasee ||**

A fire engulfed my body (for Guru). Hunger and sleep vanished. I started searching for the true Guru to whom all the devotees of the Lord search.

Ranjit had just turned eleven when a smallpox epidemic struck the country. This epidemic was causing the deaths of millions. Unfortunately, Ranjit's mother fell victim to this epidemic. His maternal grandparents took on the responsibility of raising him. However, the boy was distraught. A few months after his mother's death, he quietly left home one day. He left home and began wandering in the forest. One day, driven by hunger and thirst, he fainted in front of an old Brahmin woman's hut. The old Brahmin woman then gave him food and water, and asked, 'Son, why are you wandering in the forest at such a young age?'

Eleven-year-old Ranjit innocently replied, 'I am looking for Sadguru and Krishna, O mother. Can you take me to them?'

The old Brahmin woman was stunned. The old Brahmin woman said, 'Son, I cannot show you Krishna, but I can certainly show you a path. The path is extremely difficult. Can you do that?'

These words seemed like nectar to young Ranjit. He said, 'Mother, I will do anything to attain Sadguru and see Lord Krishna. Pleasetell me the path so I can see Sadguru and Lord Krishna.'

The old Brahmin woman said, 'Son, Lord Sukadeva resides in this forest. Lord Sukadeva is the son of Lord Ved Vyas. If you can please him by praying him, only he can grant you a vision of Lord Krishna. This will require rigorous penance. Can your childish body endure such intense penance?'

The young Ranjit said, "Mother, please guide me. I will certainly make every effort to perform severe penance. Mother, if I find Lord Sukadeva, what should I ask of him?'

The old Brahmin woman said, 'Son, when you see Lord Sukadev, hold his feet and pray to him to accept you as his disciple. Lord Sukadev is omniscient. He will fulfill all your desires and even show you Lord Krishna.'

The boy Ranjit was deeply moved by these words. He sat down to meditate under a Neem tree outside the old Brahmin woman's hut. The old Brahmin woman somehow managed to feed him to keep him alive. He performed rigorous penance for two years. Impressed by the boy's rigorous penance, Lord Sukadev appeared.

Lord Sukadev asked, 'What do you want, son?'

The boy Ranjit immediately held his feet and said, 'Make me your disciple and give me knowledge, Lord.'

Pleased with his penance, Lord Sukadev accepted him as his disciple and brought him to his Ashram. Lord Sukadev initiated him and named him Charan Das.'

The sharp intellect of the boy Charan Das enabled him to acquire the entire Vedas and Vedanta from his Gurudev Lord Sri Sukadev in a short time. Upon completion of his studies, he stood before his Guru with folded

hands, held his feet and said, 'O Lord, if you are pleased with me, please grant me the darshan of Lord Krishna.'

Seeing his disciple's deep love for Lord Krishna, Lord Sukadev was moved and promised that he would soon have the darshan of Lord Krishna. He ordered, 'Go back to the old Brahmin woman's hut now and compose the book 'Bhakti Sagar'.'

On the orders of the Guru, Charan Das Ji returned to the hut of the old Brahmin woman. It was as if the old Brahmin woman had got her son back. Both the old Brahmin woman and Charan Das Ji, like a mother and son, talked about spiritual matters for a long time that evening and discussed the fruits of Guru Prasad. Then Charan Das Ji, as per the orders of the Guru, started composing 'Bhakti Sagar'.

The great book 'Bhakti Sagar' is full of glory of Lord Krishna. The great poet Saint Shiromani Shri Saras Madhuri Ji has rightly described the glory of this book 'Bhakti Sagar' in poetic form. A poet has rightly said about the glory of this book.

ग्रन्थ महासागर उजागर सब विश्ववीच वांचत हैं जाको कवि कोविद और ज्ञानी हैं |  
साधु बुद्धिमन्त विद्विजन विविध भांति मनन करत हिय धरत योगी यति ध्यानी हैं ||  
त्यागी वैरागी जन-पढ़त ताय चितलगाय चतुर्वर्गदायक यह निश्चय कर जानी है |  
कहे सरसमाधुरी सुनाय सब सन्तन को याके अर्थ समझे होत जीवन्मुक्त प्राणी है ||

Granth Mahasagar Ujaagar Sab Vishvavich  
Vanchat Hain Jako Kavi Kovid Aur Gyani Hain |  
Sadhu Buddhimant Vidvian Vvividh Bhanti Manan  
Karat Hiya Dharat Yogi Yati Dhyani Hain ||  
Tyagi Vairagi Jan Padhat Taay Chitalagay  
Chaturvargadayak Yah Nischaya Kar Jani Hai |  
Kahe Sarasamadhuri Sunaay Sab Sanaatan  
Ko Yaake Arth Samjhe Hot Jivanmukt Prani Hai ||

Granth Mahasagar is a great epic to whom poets and learned persons sing. Sages, intelligent scholars etc by meditating on this Grnth in various ways keep it in their hearts. Yogis, Tyagis, Vairagis, they all read it with devotional heart. Poet Sarasamadhuri says that listen all the devotees, whomsoever can understand this Granth, gets salvation.

Charan Das Ji was very happy on the completion of 'Bhakti Sagar' Granth. Spring season commenced immediately after he completed this Granth. It was the first day of the month of Chaitra. The weather was extremely pleasant. After the winter fall, the trees had begun to produce new leaves. The mango trees were blossoming with flowers. The fields were like yellow carpet full of mustard flowers. The poets had called spring as the king of seasons. According to Hindu scripts, this season is said to be the son of Cupid. Describing the spring season, Lord Krishna Himself said that during spring season, the nature rejoiced at the news of the birth of a son in the house of Kamadeva, the God of beauty. The trees have laid a cradle of new leaves. The gentle fragrant wind is swaying. The atmosphere is entertained by singing cuckoo song. Lord Krishna Himself had said in the Gita that He is spring among the seasons.

**बृहत्साम तथा साम्नां गायत्री छन्दसामहम् ।**

**मासानां मार्गशीर्षोऽहमृतूनां कुसुमाकरः ॥१०.३५॥**

**Bṛhatsāma Tathā Sāmnāṃ Gāyatrī Chandasāmaham.**

**Māsānāṃ Mārgaśīrṣo'hamṛtūnāṃ Kusumākaraḥ. (Gita 10-35)**

*Among hymns I am the Bṛhatsāma. Among metres Gayatri. Among months, I am Margh month. Among seasons, I am Spring.*

n the glory of spring, some poet has rightly said.

**डार द्रुम पलना बिछौना नव पल्लव के, सुमन झिंगूला सोथा तन छबि भारी दै ।  
पवन झूलावै, केकी-कीर बतरावै 'देव', कोकिल हलावै हुलसावै कर तारी दै ॥**

पूरित पराग सों उतारो करै राई नोन, कंजकली नायिका लतान सिर सारी दै ।  
मदन महीष जू को बालक बसंत ताहि, प्रातहि जगावत गुलाब चटकरी दै ॥

Daar drum palana bichhauna nav Pallav ke,  
Suman jhingoola sotha tan chhabi bhaaree dai.  
Pavan jhoolaavai, kekee-keer bataraavain 'dev',  
Kokil halaavai hulasaavai kar taaree dai.  
Poorit paraag son utaaro karai raee non,  
Kanjakalee naayika lataan sir saaree dai.  
Madan maheep joo ko baalak basant taahi,  
Praatahi jagaavat gulaab chatakaaree dai.

The poet says that spring has arrived. Like a small child, spring is swinging on a tree branch, a cradle of new moments. A loose cloak of flowers adorns its body. With the arrival of spring, trees and plants are adorned with new leaves and flowers. The wind rocks its cradle. Kavi Dev says that peacocks and parrots converse with it in their own voices. The cuckoo rocks its cradle and expresses its joy by clapping. The heroine, in the form of a lotus bud, covers her head with a creeper-like saari and is warding off the evil eye with her pollen. She is performing a ritual to protect the child spring from the evil eye of others, just as ordinary women perform the ritual of rotating mustard and salt around a child's head and then throwing it into a fire to ward off the evil eye. This spring is the son of Kamadeva. When the rosebud bursts before it blossoms, it does so to awaken spring.

Charan Das Ji was missing his Guru Sukadev a lot in this season. He started thinking in his mind, 'O Lord, I have completed the composition of 'Bhakti Sagar' as per your orders. O Gurudev, please accept it by giving me your darshan. Give me darshan of my beloved Shri Krishna too.'

Just then the entire atmosphere became flowery with a special fragrance. This intoxicating fragrance started making him feel unconscious. Then he felt as if someone was playing the flute somewhere far away. The sound of the flute was gradually becoming louder and very captivating. Shri Charan Das Ji tries to open his eyes and sees the enchanting image of

Lord Krishna playing the flute in front of him. Praises of the Lord automatically come out of his mouth.

कस्तूरी तिलकम ललाटपटले, वक्षस्थले कौस्तुभम |  
नासाग्रे वरमौक्तिकम करतले, वेणु करे कंकणम ||  
सर्वांगे हरिचन्दनम सुललितम, कंठ च मुक्तावाली |  
गोपस्त्री परिवेष्टितो विजयते, गोपाल चूड़ामणि ||

Kastūritilakaṃ lalāṭapaṭāle vakṣaṣṭhale kaustubhaṃ.  
Nāsāgre navamauktikaṃ karatale veṇuṃ kare kaṅkaṇam.  
Sarvāṅge haricaṇḍanaṃ sulalitaṃ kaṇṭhe ca muktāvaliṃ.  
Gopatrī pariveṣṭhito vijayate gopāla cūḍāmaṇiṃ.

*With the fragrant kasturi-mark on the forehead, the precious Kaustubha gem on the chest, the lovely pearl-jewel at the nose tip, the flute in the palm and the kankan (bangle) encircling the hand, the scented sandalwood paste all over the body, the pearl-necklace around the beautiful neck, surrounded by milk-maids – may victory be yours, O crown gem of Gopalas.*

Seeing this beautiful form of the Lord, Shri Charan Das became so mesmerized that he kept staring at Him. He even forgot the simple etiquette of salutation. Then he heard another voice, ‘Charan Das, won’t you bow to the Lord?’

This is the voice of my Gurudev. Forgetting everything, Shri Charan Das fell at His feet.

गुरु गोविन्द दोनों खड़े काके लागू पाँय |  
बलिहारी गुरु आपने, गोविन्द दिओ बताय ||

Guru govind donon khade, kaake laaguun paanya.  
Balihaarii guru aapane, Govind diyo bataaya.

*Who deserves my salutations first, the Guru or Govind (the Supreme Being)? It is undoubtedly the Guru; he is the one who introduced me to Govind. Without him, how would I have met Govind?*

After paying obeisance to Gurudev, he remembered God. Shri Charan Das fell at the feet of God. He was speechless. One who had received the entire treasure, what more could he desire?

God blesses him with smile and putting his hand on his head. Then the sound of the flute slowly fades. Shri Charan Das's life's desire had been fulfilled. His heart bowed in respect and salutations to Gurudev. Gurudev kept his promise and showed him his beloved Lord Krishna.

The elderly Brahmin woman laid unconscious nearby. Seeing God, she attained liberation.

Shri Charan Das himself said that he felt as if God had taken her with him to Saket Dham. Regaining consciousness, Charan Das waited for his Guru's command.

'Son, perform the last rites of this elderly Brahmin woman like a son and proceed to Delhi. Establish your Ashram there and propagate Sanatan Dharma,' Gurudev's command was heard.

Charan Das Ji then expressed his devotion towards his Sadguru Bhagwan Sri Sukadev in this way.

पितु सँ माता सौ गुना, सुत को राखै प्यार |  
मन सेती सेवन करै, तन सँ डाँट अरू गार ||  
माता सँ हरि सौ गुना, जिनसे सौ गुरुदेव |  
प्यार करै औगुन हरै, चरणदास शुकदेव ||

Pitu soon maata sau guna, sut ko raakhai pyaar.  
Man setee sevan karai, tan soon daant aroo gaar.

**Maat a soon hari sau guna, jinase sau gurudev.  
Pyaar karain augun harai, charanadaas shukadev.**

*Loves a hundred timesmore than father. The mind is full of pleasure; it should be controlled. The God loves the devotee hundredfold than mother. But Gurudev loves his disciple hundred times more than the God. from whom there are hundred Gurudevs. Satguru Sukdev loves Charan Das in thguis way and eradicates all evi .*

Following Gurudev's instructions, Shri Charan Das Ji came to Delhi and established his Ashram there. He now became famous as Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji. At that time, Delhi was ruled by the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Sanatan Dharma was on the decline. In such a situation, the influence of Saint Shri Charan Das Ji created a surge of energy among the followers of Sanatan Dharma. His growing influence filled the Mughal Emperor Jahangir with a sense of insecurity. But he could do nothing. His ministers advised that provoking Shri Charan Das Ji was tantamount to inviting civil war.

It was Janmashtami celebration in the Ashram of Shri Charan Das. This festival was celebrated with great pomp and show at Saint Charan Das Ji's Ashram. All the Ashram residents observed fast during Janmashtmi celebration and broke their fast only after celebrating the birth of Lord Krishna at 12 o'clock mid-night and after offering Him food. On this day, fruits and sweets donated by Saint Shri Charan Das Ji's followers were abundant. Emperor Jahangir also thought of a joke. He ordered two baskets. He filled both baskets with mud and placed a layer of sweets on the top, and sent them to the Saint's Ashram as gift. The emperor's soldiers arrived at the Saint's Ashram with the gift. The Saint, using his divine vision saw what was inside the baskets. He touched the baskets with his hand and returned one basket to the emperor as a return gift. When the basket reached the emperor, he smelled a sweet mango aroma. The curious emperor immediately inspected the basket. Beneath the layer of sweets, it was filled with mangoes. Upon seeing this, the emperor was deeply saddened by his action. It is said that he immediately went to the Saint's Ashram with Empress Noor Jahan, apologized and promised never

to repeat such a thing again. From then on, Emperor Jahangir would treat the Saint with respect like of a Guru.

Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji was such a great accomplished godman. Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji composed many poetic books, prominent among which are Ashtangayoga, Narsaket, Sandeh Sagar, Bhakti Sagar, Hariprakash, Amarlok Khandham, Bhaktipadarath, Shabd, Danleela, Manavirkatkaran Gutka, Rammala, Gyan Swarodaya etc.

Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji was against caste and ancient conservative Hindu traditions and blind beliefs. He was in favor of having division of people on the basis of karma and not on the basis of lineage. In the same sequence, while attacking the dynasty-based Brahmins, he defined the word Brahmin.

**ब्रह्मण सोइ जो ब्रह्म पिछानै, बारह जाता भितर आनै |  
पाँचो वस कारे झूठ न भाखै, दिया जनेऊ हृदय राखै ||  
आतम विद्या पढै पढ़ावै, परमातम का ध्यान लगावै |  
काम क्रोध मद लोभ न होइ, चरनदास कहै ब्रह्मण सोइ ||**

**Brahman soi jo brahm pichhaanai, baarah jaata bhitar aanai.  
Paancho vas kaare jhooth na bhaakhai, diya janeoo hrday raakhai.  
Aatam vidya padhai padhaavai, paramaatam ka dhyaan lagaavai.  
Kaam krodh mad lobh na hoi, charanadaas kahai brahman soi.**

*A Brahmin is one who follows Brahma and understnads inner aatma. He does not tell lies about the five Vasus, keeps the sacred thread in his heart. He studies and teaches spiritual knowledge, meditates on God. Charandas says that he is a Brahmin who is free from lust, anger, pride, greed.*

Sadguru Bhagwan Sukadev appeared to him again in 1771 and told him that he will attain Samadhi after twelve years from now. He promised that

he himself would come to take him to Saket Dham. Saint Charan Das composed a verse on this.

**बारह बरस मैं और हूँ, मृत्यु लोक के माहि |  
फिर जहाँ ईश्वर निकट, जग में रहना नाहि ||**

**Baarah baras mai aur hoon, mrtyu lok ke maahi.  
Phir jahaan eeshvar nikat, jag mein rahana naahi.**

In the year 1785 at the age of 79, Sadguru Bhagwan Sukadev himself appeared and took him in an aircraft to Saket Dham.

This same Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji was the Sadguru Maharaj of Mata Sahajo Bai.

## **Sahjo Bai's Residence at Saint Charan Das Ashram**

Eleven-year-old Sahjo and her mother Smt. Anupi Devi soon arrived at Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji's Ashram in Delhi. At the Ashram, Shri Chhitramal Ji (nephew of merchnat Shri Hari Prasad Ji and the Saint's closest disciple) gave them a grand welcome. Upon the Saint's orders, Shri Chhitramal Ji took Sahjo and her mother Smt. Anupi Devi to the Ashram's guest house. The Saint himself departed for his hut.

Just a few moments had passed since Sahjo and her mother had arrived at the guest house when Saint Shiromani Maharaj arrived with a saintly woman. Greeting her sister-in-law Smt. Anupi Devi, he introduced the saintly woman to Sahjo and her mother Smt. Anupi Devi.

Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji said to Mrs. Anupi Devi, 'Sister-in-law, this is my elder sister (cousin), Saint Daya Bai. You probably may remember my uncle Shri Keshav Prasad, a resident of Dehra village. She is his daughter. She has dedicated her life to Lord Krishna by remaining unmarried as a Saint. She is the director of this Ashram. Although Didi Daya Bai's spiritual status is higher than mine, I was compelled to initiate her on the orders of Gurudev Bhagwan Sukadev. Nevertheless, I do not consider her a disciple, but respect her as my own mother. I am handing over Sahjo to her. She will be another mother of Sahjo in this Ashram in the form of Didi Daya Bai. Blessed is Sahjo who will receive the affection of two mothers. Daughter Sahjo, Didi Daya Bai is your aunt and now your mother as well. Touch her feet and receive her blessings.'

The young girl Sahjo was about to touch Saint Daya Bai's feet when Saint Daya Bai embraced her and said, 'The Saint speaks in a very polite manner. The Saint has accepted you as his disciple and I am also his disciple. Now, let us forget worldly relationships and embrace a spiritual one. You are my guru-sister and this is the relationship we will honor. Sisters do not touch each other's feet; they embrace and share love. Thus, the two great personalities, Saint Daya Bai and Sahjo, met. As soon as the young girl Sahjo embraced her guru-sister Saint Daya Bai, she felt as

if Goddess Radha herself had taken her under her wing. Tears began to flow from the young girl Sahjo's eyes.

She said to her guru-sister Saint Daya Bai, 'O Sister, I am foolish, ignorant, illiterate and uncultured girl. Saint Chacha Ji has certainly accepted me as his disciple but perhaps I am not worthy of it. I am in your refuge. It now depends on you whether I can become the worthy disciple of Saint Chacha Ji who is an incarnation of God himself.'

Saint Daya Bai was moved by the humility of the young girl Sahajo. She then said to Gurudev Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji and Smt. Anupi Devi Ji, 'O Gurudev and mother like Bhabhi, if you permit, I will take Sahjo with me to my room. Tomorrow morning is an auspicious day and auspicious time. I want to prepare Sahjo to accept the initiation by Gurudev.'

Both Saint and Mata Anupi Devi Ji nodded their heads and immediately gave their permission. Then, Saint Daya Bai headed towards her room taking the young girl Sahajo.

Evening was fast approaching. Dinner time was near. Gurudev Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji only ate food prepared by his elder sister Saint Daya Bai. Hence, Saint Daya Bai began preparing the meal. The young girl Sahajo Bai also joined in helping her. The meal was being prepared not only for Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji but also for two other very special guests, the young girl Sahajo Bai and her mother Mrs Anupi Devi.

The dinner was prepared on time. Mother Mrs Anupi Devi ate with Gurudev Saint Ji. Afterward, Saint Daya Bai and the young girl Sahajo also ate. After the meal, Saint Daya Bai said to mother Mr. Anupi Devi with folded hands, 'Sister-in-law, as long as you are in the Ashram, please have meal with Gurudev in my room every day. I will keep on sending you a message when the meal would be ready. If you need any other service, please feel free to ask me or Brahmachari Chhitramal. I know you are tired from your journey so, please rest in the guest house. We will meet again tomorrow morning at the breakfast. Please let Sahajo stay with me.'

Hearing Saint Daya Bai's sweet words, tears welled up in mother Anupree Devi's eyes and she said, 'Dear daughter Daya Bai, Sahajo has found a mother in you. I am now completely confident and satisfied that you will look after Sahajo. If the Saint permits, I would like permission to return to my home tomorrow. My husband is alone there waiting for my return.'

Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji then said, 'Sister-in-law, I know you are in a hurry to return to your home. I request that you go there the day after tomorrow after Sahjo's initiation ceremony.'

'Of course, of course, Shri Saint Ji, as you instruct,' with great joy Mrs Anupree Devi said and returned to the guest house with Brahmachari Chhitramal Ji to rest. The young girl Sahajo remained with Saint Daya Bai in her room. When Gurudev Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji also retired to his room, Saint Daya Bai lovingly said to Sahaji, 'Dear Sahajo, tomorrow will be your initiation ceremony. Before that, I will try to give you knowledge about the importance of initiation, Guru and Guru Mantra. Listen carefully.'

The curiosity of the girl Sahajo increased immensely. She kept her gaze fixed on the feet of Saint Daya Bai who was her aunt in worldly relation and Guru-sister in spiritual relation. She seriously tried to absorb the knowledge given by her. Saint Daya Bai started speaking.

**गुरुमंत्रो मुखे यस्य तस्य सिद्धयन्ति नान्यथा |  
दीक्षया सर्वकर्माणि सिद्धयन्ति गुरुपुत्रके ||**

**Gurumantro mukhe yasya tasya siddhayanti nanyatha.  
Dikshaya sarvakarmani siddhayanti guruputrake.**

Who has Guru Mantra in the mouth, his/ her all tasks are accomplished, not those of others. It is through initiation that the disciple connects with God through the Guru tradition.

Saint Daya Bai continued preaching. She continued, 'O Sister Sahajo, it is written in the book 'Swayambhu Agama.'

यथा मर्ग पतिम द्रष्टवा भीतो याति वने गजः ।  
अधिक्षीतो अर्चये लिंगं तथा भीतो महेश्वरी ॥

**Yatha marg patim drashtava bhito yati vane gajah.  
Adhikshito archaye lingn tatha bhito maheshvari .**

Just as an elephant becomes frightened by the sight of a lion in the forest, similarly an uninitiated man or woman trembles in fear of the illusion of this worldly forest. Without Guru, it is impossible for a man or woman to be free from the fear of this worldly existence. Guidance is absolutely essential for us, humans. This world is like a dense forest where tall trees completely obscure the Sun light. The path is invisible. The terrifying wild animals, snakes, and other forms of death stand with their mouths wide open in such dense forest. In such a situation, the Guru shows the path, guides us on the right path, protects us from wild animals and leads us to our destination. Through the Guru's grace and his eternal realization, a human being attains the ultimate position. For this reason, initiation is essential and absolutely necessary for humans. The path of the world is very unique. It seems impossible to understand it normally. Only with God's grace it becomes possible to understand His illusion. The Guru is a form of God and the only means to understand God. Shruti states that without initiation all actions are fruitless. Chanting, penance, and worship, etc are fruitless without Guru initiation. Through Guru initiation, the sins of millions of lifetimes are removed under the guidance of the Guru. Since time immemorial, the tradition of initiation by Shri Gurudev with mantras has been prevalent. Shri Gurudev's aim is to free his disciples from worldly suffering and provide them with the experience of peace. Shri Gurudev knows that for this a pure intellect and a virtuous attitude are essential. Purity of intellect awakens the inspiration for self-development and the disciple becomes eligible to enjoy boundless worldly and spiritual pleasures. Gurudev Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji will initiate you tomorrow morning, with the Gayatri mantra. The Gayatri mantra bestows wisdom. This is inspirational and promotes human well-being. This mantra inspires one to embrace all higher values of life, both personal and social. In short, this mantra is the entire life of every human being.

In Atharva Veda 19/71/1 it is written about Gayatri Mantra:

ओ३म् स्तुता मया वरदा वेदमाता,  
प्रचोदयन्तां पावमानी द्विजानाम् ।  
आयुः प्राणं प्रजां पशुं कीर्तिं द्रविणं ब्रह्मवर्चसम्,  
महां दत्तवा व्रजत ब्रह्मलोकम् ॥

Om stuta maya varada vedamata,  
Prachodayantam pavamani dvijanam.  
Ayuh pranam prajam pashum kirtim dravinam bramavarchasam,  
Mahyam dattava vrajat bramalokam.

That is, I have studied the praise of Gayatri, the mother of Vedas, who bestows desired results. O Gurus, please teach me more about this. This mother of Vedas purifies both the twice-born and the twice-born. By granting me good health and long life, knowledge of life, excellent children, animal husbandry, virtue and fame, the knowledge of earning wealth, knowledge of the radiant form of Brahman and his good advice, O Gurus, lead me to the luminous Brahman.

Emperor Vishvarath experienced the Gayatri mantra during his meditation. During his meditation, he felt a bright light which was soon replaced by the form of a Goddess. The Goddess had five heads facing in different directions. In her ten hands, she held all the weapons possessed by the Trinity. Upon seeing Goddess Shakti, Emperor Vishvarath bowed down and a Sanskrit verse spontaneously came out of his mouth:

ओ३म् भूर्भुवः स्वः तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं ।  
भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

Om bhurbhuvah svah tatsaviturvarenyam.  
Bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayat .

‘O owner of the three worlds, I meditate on Your radiant form. May this form of yours always inspire my mind to follow the right path.’

Saint Daya Bai thus explained the importance of initiation to the young girl Sahajo. The third quarter of the night had begun. Saint Daya Bai placed the girl Sahajo's bed on the ground near her. The girl, tired from the journey immediately fell asleep. When Sahajo awoke in the morning, she remembered every word of the teachings of Saint Daya Bai. As soon as Saint Daya Bai learned that Sahajo had awakened, she instructed her to complete her daily rituals, bathe in the holy Yamuna River and return to the room quickly.

Sahajo followed her instructions. By the time Sahajo returned from her daily rituals and bathe in the holy Yamuna River, Saint Daya Bai had already lit the sacrificial fire and made all the arrangements for Sahajo's initiation. In due course, Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji arrived at the Yagya site. Gurudev then initiated Sahjo with the Gayatri Mantra. Her initiated name became 'Saint Sahjo Bai'.

The very next day following the initiation ceremony, mata Anupi Devi returned to her home. Both Saint Daya Bai and Saint Sahjo Bai bid her an emotional farewell and requested that she should continue to visit the Ashram with Sahjo's father, Shri Hari Prasad Ji whenever possible. Brahmachari Chhitramal Ji went to Parikshitpur to escort her home. Saint Sahjo Bai, initiated by Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji, became Saint Daya Bai's most beloved younger sister. Both sisters lived in the same place, in Saint Daya Bai's room. Saint Sahjo Bai used to address her as Didi Maa.

Saint Daya Bai was born in the year 1693 and was approximately 13 years older than Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji and approximately 32 years older than Saint Sahajo Bai. Saint Daya Bai's affection made Sahjo Bai completely forget her home. Shri Hari Prasad Ji and Smt Anupree Devi Ji would occasionally visit the Ashram of Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji. Seeing the expression of happiness on their daughter Sahajo's face, they felt a special joy. Gradually, in the company of Saint Daya Bai and Gurudev Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji, Saint Sahajo Bai's

knowledge continued to increase day by day. In those days, Saint Daya Bai was composing the poetic book 'Daya Bodh'. The book 'Daya Bodh' is a very devotional book dedicated to Guru Saint Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji and Lord Shri Krishna. Whenever Saint Daya Bai composed a verse, she would immediately recite it to Sahjo Bai. Although Sahjo Bai herself was a devoted devotee of Lord Krishna, she sometimes felt that she might have to take another birth to attain the love for Lord Krishna that Didi Maa Daya Bai had for Him. She would bow her head before Didi Maa Saint Daya Bai. Her heart yearned to touch her feet but Saint Daya Bai would not allow her to touch her feet.

One day, Saint Sahjo Bai confided this sorrow to Didi Maa Saint Daya Bai. Didi Maa lovingly said, 'Sister Sahjo, with the divine vision bestowed upon me by Gurudev, I can see that you were the dearest friend of Radha, the beloved of Krishna, in Dwapar era. Both Krishna and Radha are my idols. I cannot bear the sin that a friend of my idols touches my feet.'

Didi Maa Daya Bai continued, 'O Sahjo, today I will tell you the story of your previous birth. In the Dwapar Yuga when Lord Krishna incarnated on earth and was performing His leela in Braj, you were born as Lalita, a friend of Mother Radha. Your Lalita form originated from Radha Rani's body. Whenever Radha and Krishna had some sort of playful disagreement, you often sided with Krishna and criticized Radha even though in your eyes Radha and Krishna were one and the same. There was no jealousy in your heart. Seeing Radha and Krishna together brought you joy and seeing their discord brought you sorrow. You were a selfless gopi. When the Raas Leela began, you stood guard at the entrance of the Nidhivan, ensuring that no other men could enter. Entry into the Raas Leela was prohibited for men other than Lord Krishna. Once, Lord Shiva Himself came to witness the Lord's Raas Leela. You prevented Him from entering. Then Lord Shiva said to you that O Lalita, Krishna is our idol. Our hearts find no peace without seeing him. There must be some way for you to show us our beloved. Then you said that O Bholenath, You know very well that no man other than Krishna can enter in the Raas Leela. Yes, if You must see the Lord, You must adorn the form of Gopi. Lord Shiva immediately granted permission for you to transform Bholenath into a form of Gopi. You dressed Him in a choli, put earrings in His ears, covered

Him with a veil, and so on. Bholenath then entered the Raas Leela and was satisfied by seeing His Beloved Lord Krishna. When the other Gods learned of this, they also came to you with similar requests. You did not listen to them. The Gods then became angry and cursed you to incarnate on Earth twice in human form in the Kaliyuga. In your first incarnation, you took the form of Swami Haridas Ji. In that incarnation, you revealed the divine form of God through your musical practice. You educated disciples like Tansen and Baiju Bawra. Through your musical practice, you revealed Radha and Krishna and gave everyone their Darshan.'

Hearing this story, Sahjo Bai cried a lot that day on Didi Maa's affection. Putting her head on Didi Maa's shoulder, she was sobbing and saying, 'Didi Maa, you should never go anywhere leaving me.'

Didi Maa said, 'Sahjo sister, whoever has come in this world, has to go. We should just wish to Gurudev and God that we should never deviate from our duties. Remember Sahjo that serving the Saints is itself serving God. If Hari name is like a boat to cross the ocean of the world, then the Saint is its rower. Therefore, one should always keep on doing satsang and serving the Saints. A verse of service to the Saints came out from her mouth.

साध साध सब कोउ कहै, दुरलभ साधू सेव |  
जब संगति है साधकी, तब पावै सब भेव ||  
साध रूप हरि आप हैं, पावन परम पुरान |  
मेटैं दुविधा जीव की, सब का करें कल्याण ||  
कोटि जक्ष ब्रत नेम तिथि, साध संग में होय |  
विपम ब्याधि सब मिटत है, सांति रूप सुख जोय ||  
साधू बिरला जक्त में, हष सोक करि हीन |  
कह न सुनन कूँ बहुत हैं, जन-जन आगे दीन ||  
कलि केवल संसार में और न कोउ उपाय |  
साध-संग हरि नाम बिनु मन की तपन न जाय ||

साध-संग जग में बड़ो, जो करि जानै कोय।  
आधो छिन सतसंग को, कलमख डारे खोय॥

Saadh saadh sab kou kahai, duralabh saadhoo sev.  
Jab sangati hvai saadhakee, tab Paavai sab bhev.  
Saadh roop aap hain, paavan param puraana.  
Metain duvidha jeev kee, sab ka karai n kalyaan.  
Koti jaksh brat nem tithi, saadh sang mein hoy.  
Vipam byaadhi sab mitat hai, saanti roop sukh joy.  
Saadhoo birala jakt mein, hash sok kari heen.  
Kah na sunan koon bahu t hain, jan-jan aage deen.  
Kali keval sansaar mein aur na kou upaay.  
Saadh-sang hari naam binu man kee tapan na jay.  
Saadh-sang jag mein bado, jo kari jaanai koy.  
Aadho chhin satasang ko, kalamakh daare khoy.

*Everyone says to meditate on Lord, but it is very difficult. When the seeker has association with Guru, then technique of meditation on Lord is obtained. Guru is the saintly form of Hari, holy and supreme. Guru eradicates the troubles and remains engaged in the welfare of the disciple. Satsang brings fruitful results which may not be achieved by fasting etc. Most difficult situations can be made easy with Satsang and devotee finds peace and happiness. A Saint can give one salvation by destroying all troubles and sadness etc. Though people may say many ways but in this Kali Yug, Satsang is the only remedy for salvation, peace and happiness. Satsang is the greatest virtue in this world. Even half a moment of Satsang can destroy the sorrow.*

Didi Maa Daya Bai's voice was extremely melodious. The devotional singing of this hymn by Saint Daya Bai made Sahajo Bai completely engrossed in love for Gurfu and Govind. Tears started flowing from her eyes. Both the Guru-sisters embraced each other.

The time kept on passing this way. Didi Maa Daya Bai not continued to impart the knowledge of Vedas and Vedanta to Sahajo Bai along with Gurudev Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji.

Guru Bhakti had a special place in those teachings. The seed of Guru Bhakti was sown in Sahajo Bai's heart in such a way that she composed a very beautiful composition and surprised even Didi Maa Daya Bai herself.

राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
हरि ने जन्म दियो जग माहीं, गुरु ने आवागमन छुड़ाई |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
हरि ने पाँच चोर दिए साथ, गुरु ने लई छुड़ाय अनाथा |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
हरि ने कुटुम्ब जाल में घेरी, गुरु ने काटी ममता बेड़ी |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
हरि ने रोग भोग उरझायू, गुरु जोगी कर सबई छुड़ायू |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
हरि ने कर्म भर्म भर्मायू, गुरु ने आत्म रूप दिखायू |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
हरि ने मोसूँ आप छिपायो, गुरु दीपक दे ताहि दिखायो |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
फिर हरि बँध-मुक्ति गति लाए, गुरु ने सब ही भर्म मिटाए |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||  
चरणदास पर तन मन वारूँ, गुरु ना तजू हरि को तज डारूँ |  
राम तजूँ पै गुरु ना विसारूँ, गुरु के सम हरि को ना निहारूँ ||

Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon |

Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Hari ne janm diyo jag maaheen,  
 Guru ne aavaagaman chhudaan |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Hari ne paanch chor die saatha,  
 Guru ne laee chhudaay anaatha |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Hari ne kutumb jaal mein gheree,  
 Guru ne kaatee mamata bedee |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Hari ne rog bhog urajhaayoo,  
 Guru jogee kar sabee chhudaayoo |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Hari ne karm bharm bharmayoo,  
 Guru ne aatam roop dikhaayoo |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Hari ne mosoon aap chhipaayo,  
 Guru Deepak de taahi dikhaayo |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Phir hari bandh-mukti gati lae,  
 Guru ne sab hee bharm mitae |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||  
 Charanadaas par tan man vaaroon,  
 Guru na tajoo hari ko taj daaroon |  
 Raam tajaan pai guru na visaaroon,  
 Guru ke sam hari ko na nihaaroon ||

In this verse, Sahajo Bai expressed her feelings towards Gurudev in a humble and intimate manner. Sahajo Bai revealed the truth in its essence.

Through this verse, Sahajo Bai also sends a message to God. I do not look at Hari like I look at Guru, that is O Hari, I do not look at you with the same mind, feeling, respect, devotion, faith and belief with which I look at my Guru. The mind becomes happy just by seeing the Guru; I have understood this feeling. Seeing the Guru gives such peace to the heart as if one has found a very precious treasure. Sahajo Bai further says that Hari gave me birth in this world, but the Guru freed me from the cycle of birth and death. We, the worldly beings keep going through the cycle of 84 lakh species of life: birth, death, and then birth again. This cycle never ends. The Guru taught such a lesson, taught such a method that the very idea of birth and death ended. Sahjo Bai further states that Hari trapped the family in the web of illusion and attachment, but the Guru cut the chains of attachment. In this world, whose selfish desires are fulfilled by you, he becomes happy with you, while anyone whose wishes are not fulfilled by you, becomes angry. The Guru cut the very cord of attachment and love. He ended all trouble. Although it may not be easy to follow the Guru's orders and understand the truth, but you will surely be blessed by Guru. Gurudev says that love your family but do not get entangled in attachment. This is the secret to experience happiness and joy in life. Sahjo Bai further conveys the message that Hari entangled us in disease and pleasure. The Guru freed us from all this by making us a Yogi. God gave us the body. The body is a home of diseases. The desire for temporary pleasure makes the body sick. Human beings commit so many inappropriate acts driven by lust, anger, attachment, and greed. Due to these vices, they bring trouble upon themselves. The Guru liberates the disciple by making him indifferent to these pleasures. Sahjo Bai further says that Hari is omnipotent. He is the controller of all. He is the doer of everything, but is invisible. He has hidden himself. The Guru, who has bestowed so many blessings can easily be seen in person. Be blessed by seeing his divine form. Talk to him, receive his blessings, receive his grace and have a direct darshan. Blessed by the Guru's grace, Sahajo Bai, devotes her body and soul to her Sadguru Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji.

Pleased by this verse, Didi Ma Daya Bai embraced Sahajo Bai. A composition also came out of her own mouth.

गुरु बिन ज्ञान ध्यान नहीं होवै | गुरु बिनु चौरासी मन जावै ||  
 गुरु बिन राम भक्ति नहीं जागै | गुरु बिन असुभ कर्म नहीं त्यागै ||  
 गुरु ही दीन दयाल गोसाईं | गुरु सरनै जो कोइ जाई ||  
 पलटैं करैं काग सूँ हंसा | मन को मेटत हैं सब संसा ||  
 गुरु हैं सागर कृपा निधाना | गुरु हैं ब्रह्म रूप भगवाना ||  
 हानि लाभ दोउ सम करि जानैं | हदै ग्रन्थ नीकी विधि मानैं ||  
 दै उपदेश करैं भ्रम नासा | दया देत सुख सागर बासा ||  
 गुरु को अहिनिस ध्यान जो करिये | बिधिवत सेवा में अनुसरिये ||  
 तन मन सूँ अज्ञा में रहिये | गुरु आज्ञा बिन कछु न करिये ||

Guru bin gyaan dhyaan nahin hovai |  
 Guru binu chaurassee man jaavai ||  
 Guru bin raam bhakti Nahin jaagai |  
 Guru bin asubh karm Nahin tyagai ||  
 Guru hee deen dayaal gosaeen |  
 Guru saranai jo koi jae ||  
 Palatain karain kaag soon hansa |  
 Man ko metat hain sab sansa ||  
 Guru hain saagar krpa nidhaana |  
 Guru hain brahm roop bhagavaana ||  
 Haani laabh dou sam kari jaanain |  
 Hadai granth neekie vidhi maanain ||  
 Dai upadesh karain bhram naasa |  
 Daya det sukh saagar baasa ||  
 Guru ko ahinis dhyaan jo kariye |  
 Bidhivat seva mein anusariye ||  
 Tan man soon agya mein rahiye |  
 Guru aagya bin kachhoo na kariye ||

Without Guru, knowledge and meditation cannot be attained. Without  
 Guru, the mind goes into eighty-four stages of bewilderment. Without Guru,  
 devotion to Ram cannot be awakened. Without Guru, inauspicious deeds  
 cannot be abandoned. Guru is the kindest person. Whomsoever takes

refuge in Guru, obtains salvation. Guru turns a crow into a swan. He dispels all worries from the mind. Guru is the ocean of mercy. Guru is the form of God in the form of Brahma. Guru gives the understanding of loss and gains equally. Guru teaches us to follow the right method of scriptures. He gives advice and removes confusion. He is merciful and resides in the ocean of happiness. Meditate on Guru continuously. Follow the prescribed service to the Guru. This will remove ignorance of your body and mind. Do nothing without Guru's orders.

In this way, ten years passed. Didi Maa Daya Bai fell seriously ill in the year 1746. In the presence of Sant Shiromani and Sahjo Bai, Didi Maa Daya Bai left her mortal body after dedicating Sahjo Bai to Gurudev. Sahjo Bai had lost not only Guru-sister but a lady like her mother. Her heart wanted to cry out loud, but Gurudev's knowledge of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita stopped her from doing so.

**अव्यक्तोऽयमचिन्त्योऽयमविकार्योऽयमुच्यते ।**

**तस्मादेवं विदित्वैनं नानुशोचितुमर्हसि ॥**

**Avyakto 'yam acintyo 'yam avikāryo 'yamucyate.**

**Tasmād evaṁ viditvainaṁ ānuśocitumarhasi.**

Gurudev Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das Ji enlightened Sahjo Bai, 'Daughter, the soul is said to be unmanifest, unimagined, and unchangeable. Knowing this, you should not grieve for the body. Daya Bai's life's purpose has been fulfilled and she has gone to Saket Dham to live with the Lord. She will not be reborn again. She will wait for you in Saket Dham. As long as the Lord has given you breath, carry forward Daya Bai's work.'

Sahjo Bai then composed herself. First of all, she collected all the poetic verses of Didi Maa Daya Bai and published them under the name 'Daya Bodh'. She started following the path shown by Didi Maa Daya Bai. She took the complete responsibility of serving Gurudev. She herself now cooked Gurudev's food with her own hands and fed him. Gurudev was always very busy and never had time for himself. He was so much busy

in doing social welfare works. He was neither concerned about his body nor his health. Sahajo Bai ensured that Gurudev got food on time to keep his body alive. Along with this, she started helping Gurudev in his social welfare works. Sahajo Bai's poetic heart also compelled her to write poetry. Sahajo Bai then composed the major devotional text 'Sahaj Prakash'.

## Sahaj Prakash - A Glimpse

The 12th edition of 'Sahaj Prakash', titled 'Sahjo Bai Ki Bani', was published in 1977 by 'Santbani Pustak Mala', Allahabad. The book 'Sahajbai Ki Bani' is divided into 21 chapters. We will briefly discuss each topic covered in 'Sahaj Prakash', composed by Mata Sahajobai. 'Sahaj Prakash' is a captivating poem composed in the sweet Braj language. This poetic granth contains all the teachings of human life, from devotion to action. As discussed in this book above, Sahajo Bai held Gurudev in a higher position than God. She followed this principle of Saint Kabir Ji 100%.

गुरु गोविन्द दोऊ खड़े, काके लागू पांय |  
बलिहारी गुरु अपने गोविन्द दियो बताय ||

Guru govind dou khade, kaake laagoon paany |  
Balihaaree guru apane Govind diyo bataay ||

In the book 'Sahaj Prakash', Ma Sahajo Bai's devotion to her Guru is fully evident. She begins this book with a prayer to her Guru.

नमो नमो गुरु देवन देवा | नमो नमो गुरु अगम अभेवा ||  
नमो नमो निरलम्ब निरासा | नमो नमो परमात्म बासा ||  
नमो नमो त्रिभुवन के स्वामी | नमो नमो गुरु अंतरजामी ||  
नमो नमो गुरु पातक हरता | नमो नमो पारायण करता ||  
गति मति छाके आनंद रूपा | नमो नमो गुरु ब्रह्म स्वरूपा ||  
नमो नमो मम प्रान पियारे | नमो नमो तिर्गुन तें नियारे ||  
भक्ति ज्ञान जोग के राजा | सहजो के पुरबो सब काजा ||  
जो कोई सरन तुम्हारी आयो | तुरीयातीत बिज्ञान बसायो ||

Namo namo guru devan deva | namo namo guru agam abheva ||  
Namo namo niralamb nirasa | namo namo paramatam basa ||  
Namo namo tribhuvan ke svaami | namo namo guru antarajami ||  
Namo namo guru patak harata | namo namo parayan karata ||  
Gati mati chhake anand rupa | namo nam o guru bram svarupa ||  
Namo namo mam pran piyaare | namo namo tirgun tem niyaare ||  
Bhakti dnyan jog ke raja | sahajo ke purabo sab kaaja ||  
Jo koi saran tumhari aayo | turiyatit bignyan basayo ||

*O Gurudev, I pay my obeiscence to you. O Guru I bow to you as you are difficult to find. O Guru I bow to you as you eradicate hoplessnessness. O Guru I bow to you as you reside in Paramaatm (self-consciousness). O Guru I bow to you as you are the Lord of three worlds. O Guru I bow to you as you are omniscient. O Guru I bow to you as you take away sins. O Guru I bow to you as you are always engaged in Yoga. You are emodiment of wisdom and a form of pleasure. O Guru I bow to you as you are Brahm. O Guru I bow to you as you are most dear to me. O Guru I bow to you as you are above Trigun (Sat, Rajas and Tamas Gun do not affect you). You are the master of wisdom and Yog. O Guru, complete all my tasks (for which I took birth). Whomsoever surrenders you, he/ she becomes enlightened.*

Maharishi Sukadev was the Gurudev of Saint Charan Das Ji, the Guru of Sahajo Bai. Therefore, Sahajo Bai addressed him as Dada (grandfather) and pays respects to both him and her Gurudev Sant Shromani Charan Das Ji.

कर जोरूँ परनाम करि, धरूँ चरण पर शीश |  
दादा गुरु सुकदेव जी, पूरन बिस्वा बीस ||  
परमहंस तारन तरन, गुरु देवन गुरु देव |  
अनुभै बानो दीजिये, सहजो पावे भेव ||

**Kar joroon paranaam kari, dharoon charan par sheesh |  
Daada guru sukadev jee, Pooran bisva bees ||  
Paramahans taaran taran, guru devan guru dev |  
Anubhai baano deejaye, sahajo paave bhev ||**

*I bow my head with folded hands at your feet, Dada Guru Sukadev Ji. You are complete embodiment of God. O Paramhansa, you provide salvation. You are the Guru of Gurus. Please guide me to get love.*

Mother Sahajo Bai says that there are four types of Gurus. But my Guru Charan Das Ji is all-powerful; all the four types of characters of Gurus are present in him.

**गुरु हैं चार प्रकार के, अपने अपने अंग |  
गुरु पारस दीपक गुरु, मलयागिरि गुरु भृंग ||  
चरणदास समरथ गुरु, सर्व अंग तेहि मांहि |  
जैसे कूँ तैसा मिले, रीता छाँड़ें नाहिं ||**

**Guru hain chaar prakaar ke, apan e apane ang |  
Guru paaras deepak guru, malayaagiri guru bhrng ||  
Charanadaas samarath guru, sarb ang tehi maanhi |  
Jaise koon taisa mile, reeta chhaanden naahin ||**

*Sahajobai says that there are four types of Gurus, each with its own distinct characteristics. One Guru is like the philosopher's stone who transforms a disciple into pure gold; the second Guru is like a lamp who guides the disciple to the path of knowledge; the third Guru makes the disciple fragrant, or endowed with virtues like the Malayachal; and the fourth Guru is like a bumblebee, makes one grasp the essence of truth. Sahjo says that my Guru Charandas is capable and competent in every way. He possesses all the qualities and knowledge. He enriches each disciple with the same knowledge, but he never leaves anyone empty or ignorant.*

Attaining Hari's grace is a difficult task; it may or may not be attained. But the Guru always keeps the mind pure by his grace.

हरि कृपा जो होए तो, नहीं होए तो नाहिं |  
पै गुरु कृपा दया बिनु, सकल बुद्धि बहि जांहि ||

Hari krpa jo hoe to, naaheen hoe to naahin |  
Pai guru krpa daya binu, sakal buddhi bahi jaanhi ||

The feet of the Guru are the pilgrimage sites to cross this ocean of emotions. Those who caught him were blessed.

सब तीरथ गुरु के चरन, नित ही परबी होए |  
सहजो चरनोदक लिए, पार रहित नहीं कोय ||

Sab teerath guru ke charan, nit hee parabhee hoe |  
Sahajo charanodak lie, paar rahit Nahin koy ||

Only that disciple who follows the orders of his Guru and works diligently is blessed.

गुरु अज्ञा दृढ करि गहै, गुरु मत सहजो चाल |  
रोम रोम गुरु को रटै, सो सिष होए निहाल ||

Guru agya drdh kari gahai, guru mat sahajo chaal |  
Rom rom guru ko ratai, so sish hoe nihaal ||

A disciple who disobeys his Guru and finds faults in him, can never attain salvation.

गुरु अज्ञा मानें नहीं, गुरहि लगावे दोष |  
गुरु निंदक जग में दुखी, मुए न पावे मोष ||

Guru agya maanen nahin, gurahi lagaave dosh |  
Guru nindak jag mein duhkhee, mue na paave mosh ||

While describing the glory of the Guru, Mother Sahajo Bai says.

परमेश्वर सूं गुरु बड़े, गावत बेद पुरान |  
सहजो हरि के मुक्ति है, गुरु के घर भगवान् ||  
दीपक ले गुरु ज्ञान को, जगत अँधेरे माँहि |  
काम क्रोध मद मोह में, सहजो उरझो नाहिं ||  
सहजो गुरु परताप सूं, होए समुन्दर पार |  
बेद अर्थ गूंगा कहै, बानी कित इक बार ||  
निश्चै यह मन डूबता, मोह लोभ की धार |  
चरणदास सतगुरु मिले, सहजो लई उबार ||  
चिउंटी जहां न चढ़ सके, सरसों न ठहराय |  
सहजो कूँ वा देस में, सतगुरु दर्ई बसाय ||  
सहजो गुरु ऐसा मिला, जैसे धोबी होय |  
दै दै साबुन ज्ञान का, मलमल डारे धोय ||

Parameshvar soon guru bade, gaavat bed puraani |  
Sahajo hari ke mukti hai, guru ke ghar bhagavaan ||  
Deepak le guru gyaan ko, jagat andhere maanhi |  
Kaam krodh mad moh mein, sahajo urajho naahin ||  
Sahajo guru parataap soon, hoe samundar paar |  
Bed arth goonga kahai, baanee kit ik baar ||  
Nischai yah man doobata, moh lobh kee dhaar |  
Charanadaas sataguru mile, sahajo laee ubaar ||  
Chiunti jahan na chadh sake, sarason na thaharaay |  
Sahajo koon va des mein, sataguru daee basaay ||  
Sahajo guru aisa mila, jaise dhobe e hoy |  
Dai dai saabun gyaan ka, malamal daare dhoy ||

*The Vedas and Puranas sing that the Guru is greater than God. Sahojo says that Lord is within the Gurfu. God lives in the heart of Guru. Taking the lamp of Guru's knowledge, do not get entangled in lust, anger, pride and attachment. Sahojo says that with the glory of the Guru, cross the ocean. With the Gurus' grace, the dumb man can tell the meaning of the Vedas. Surely this mind is drowning in the torrent of attachment and greed. Sahojo met her Satguru Charandas, who saved her. Where an ant cannot climb, mustard seeds cannot grow, the Satguru made her settle in that place. country. Sahojo says that a Guru is like a washerman. He gives the soap of knowledge to his devotees, that washes the sin.*

Mother Sahajo suggests to avoid such cunning gurus who are greedy for your money.

**ऐसे गुरु तो बहुत हैं, धूत धूत धन लेंहिं |**

**सहजो सतगुरु जो मिलें, मुक्ति धाम फल देंहिं ||**

**Aise guru to bahut hain, dhoot dhoot dhan lenhin |**

**Sahajo sataguru jo milen, mukti dhaam phal denhin ||**

Devotion is essential for attaining Guru and Brahman. The union of devotion and Satsang in the heart brings happiness, peace, and ultimately salvation.

**साध मिले पूरी भई, जनम जनम की आस |**

**सहजो पायो भाव तें, सतसंग में बास ||**

**साध मिले हरि ही मिलें, मेरे मन परतोत |**

**सहजो सूरज धूप ज्यों, जल पाले की रीत ||**

**साध संग में चांदना, सकल अन्धेरा और |**

**सहजो दुर्लभ पाइए, सतसंगत में ठौर ||**

**जो आवे सतसंग में, जाति बरन कुल खोय |**

**सहजो मैल कुचैल जल, मिले सु गंगा होय ||**

Saadh mile pooree bhee, Janam janam kee aas |  
 Sahajo paayo bhaav ten, satasang mein baas ||  
 Saadh mile hari hee milen, mere man paratot |  
 Sahajo sooraj dhoop jyon, jal pale kee reet ||  
 Saadh sang mein chaandana, sakal andhera aur |  
 Sahajo durlabh paie, satasangat mein thaur ||  
 Jo aave satasang mein, jaati baran kul khoy |  
 Sahajo mail kuchail jal, mile su ganga hoy ||

*Sahjo says that I met the Saint, and my wishes of many births were fulfilled. I found peace in Satsang and devotion. I met the Saint and my heart was filled with joy. As the Sun and water nourish, Guru nourishes my body (for spritualism). The company of the Saint is like moonlight which dispels all darkness (of ignorance). It is rare to find a Satsang. Whomsoever comes to Satsang loses his/her caste, creed, and family. He/she becomes purified as the dirty and impure water becomes purified after merging with Ganga.*

Mother Sahajo Bai rebuked those who fail to surrender themselves to God even in old age. Only God can grant you happiness in life and a peaceful death.

सहजो धोले आइया, झड़ने लगे दाँत |  
 तन गुंझल पड़ने लगीं, सूखन लागी आंत ||  
 ऐसी बरस ऊपर लगी, बिरध अवस्था होए |  
 आगे की थिरता नहीं, पिछली गई सब खोय ||  
 तीन अवस्था बीत कर, चौथी आई मंद |  
 वृद्ध अवस्था सिर चढ़ी, ताहू न चेता अंध ||  
 चार अवस्था खो दई, लियो न हरि को नाम |  
 तन छूटे जम कूटि है, पापी जम के ग्राम ||  
 आया जगत में क्या किया, तन पाला कै पेट |  
 सहजो दिन धंधे गया, रैन गई सुख लेट ||

Sahajo dhole aaiya, jhadane lage daant |  
 Tan gunjhal padane lageen, sookhan laagae aant ||  
 Aisee baras oopar lagee, biradh Avastha hoe |  
 Aage kee thirata nahin, pichhalee gaee sab khoy ||  
 Teen Avastha beet kar, chauthee aae mand |  
 Vrddh avastha sir chadhee, taahoo na cheta andh ||  
 Chaar avastha kh o daeen, liyo na hari ko naam |  
 Tan chhoote jam kooti hai, paapee jam ke graam ||  
 Aaya jagat mein kya kiya, tan paala kai pet |  
 Sahajo din dhandhe gaya, rain gaee sukh let ||

*Sahjo says that in old age, teeth started falling out. The body started to tremble. Intestines started to dry up. It has been a long time and you have reached now a state of old age. There is no stability in the future. Everything that you have will be lost. After three stages of life (childhood, student life and adulthood) are gone and now the fourth stage of old has begun. Though old age is unbearable, yet the man blinded with attachment with the world is not aware. If you have lost all the four stages and have not taken the name of Hari, how will you show your fact to Yama on your death? What did you do after coming into this world? You raised your body only to eat and sleep. The day passed in doing worldly business and the night spent in sleeping.*

Mother Sahajo has described the state of death very well. If a person does not wake up in time and take refuge in God, he/she will remain trapped in the cycle of birth and death in the eighty-four lakh species.

जम की सूरत देखकर, सुधि बुधि गई नसाय |  
 सहजो जो संकट बन्यो, मुख सूँ काहू ना जाय ||  
 सहजो मिरतू के समय, पीड़ा होय अपार |  
 बीछू एक हजार ज्यों, डंक लगाई इकसार ||  
 पकरि बाँध जम ले चलै, धर्मराय के पास |  
 कई बार आगे गए, छप्पन जहाँ तरास ||

कई भांति के दंड हैं, सहजो नाना त्रास |  
नरक कुंड दुख भुगति करि, फिर चौरासी बास ||

Jam kee soorat dekhakar, sudh i budhi gae nasaay |  
Sahajo jo sankat banyo, mukh soon kaahoo na jaay ||  
Sahajo miratoo ke samay, peeda hoy apaar |  
Beechhoo ek hazaar jyon, dank lagae ikasaar ||  
Pakari bandh jam le chalai, dharmaraay ke paas |  
Kae baar aage gae, chhappan jahaan taraas ||  
Kae bhaanti ke dand hain, sahajo naana traas |  
Narak kund dukh bhugati kari, phir chauraasee baas ||

*Sahajo ays that seeing the face of Yama, the senses are lost. What troubles one has to go, no one describe. At the time of death, the pain is immense. It looks as if a thousand scorpions have stung all at once. Yama, after getting hold of soul, takes it to Dharamraj. One has to go to fifty-six places (where he/ she will be punished). There are many types of punishments. There are many terrors. After suffering the pain of the hell-pit, the soul is sent again to earth where it revolves in 84 lakh yonies.*

Mother Sahajo has depicted suicide or any type of premature death as extremely painful. It is only by turning away from God that a person dies in such a way and suffers unbearable pain.

काल मौत जो आगे गाई | अकाल मृत्यु कहै सहजो बाई ||  
सस्तर मौत मरे जो कोई | यह भी मौत अकालहिं होइ ||  
बिगड़े रोग पथ नहीं कीन्हो | यह भी मौत अकालहिं चीन्हो ||  
कोई भांति जो बिष खा मरै | और जीवित पावक में जरै ||  
जल में डूब जाए जो कैसे | लागे प्रेत मरै कोई ऐसे ||  
सांप डसे छूटे जो काया | महापतनी तें दबि जाया ||  
कोई ठग फांसी दे मारा | जंगल पसु तोड़ जो डारा ||  
यह सब मृत्यु अकाल दिखाई | मुए सँ योनि पिसाचर पाई ||

प्रेत योनि कूँ पाए के, दुखी भये अज्ञान |  
आप दुखी दुख देत हैं, उठ गई सब पहिचान ||

Kaa I maut jo aage gaee | akaal mrtyu kahai sahajo baee ||  
Sastar maut mare jo koe | yah bhee maut akaalahin hoi ||  
Bigade rog patth nahin keenho | yah bhee maut akaalahin cheenho ||  
Koe bhaanti jo bish kha marai | aur jeevit Paavak mein jarai ||  
Jal mein doob jae jo kaise | laage pret marai koe aise ||  
Saamp dase chhoote jo kaaya | mahalaapatanee ten dab i jaaya ||  
Koe thag phaanssee de maara | jangal pasu tod jo daara ||  
Yah sab mrtyu akaal dikhaee | mue soon yoni pisaachar pae ||  
Pret yoni koon pae ke, duhkhee bhaye agyaan |  
Aap duhkhee dukh det hain, uth gaee sab pahichaan ||

*Sahajo Bai says that whomsoever dies before matured age, is considered untimely death. If someone dies prematurely due to the serious diseases, is also an untimely death. Whomsoever dies by consuming poison, burnt alive in the fire, drowns in water, dies due to snake bite, gets buried under due to earth quake etc, hangs himself/ herself, killed by a wild animal, all these types of deaths are untimely deaths. After such a death, he/ she gets the ghostly rebirth which is very sad and causes pain. The person loses his/her recognition and remains confused.*

Mother Sahajo Bai says that chanting the name of Hari is the only path to salvation. The scriptures may teach you karmayoga, gyanyoga, bhaktiyoga, etc, and can make you wise, but devotion to Hari is the only path which can free you from the cycle of birth and death in eighty-four lakh species.

लाख चौरासी यह कही, फेर फेर भुगतंत |  
जनम मरन छूटे नहीं, बिना सरन भगवंत ||  
जज्ञ दान तीरथ करै, पूजा भांति अनेक |  
मुक्ति ना पावे सहजिया, बिना भक्ति हरि एक ||  
इन्दर की पदवी मिलै, और ब्रह्मा की आब |

आगे तो भी मरन है, सहजो सकल बहाव ||  
 राम नाम ले सहजिया, दीजै सर्व अकोर |  
 तीन लोक के राज लों, अंत जाहुगे छोर ||  
 बिना भक्ति थोथे सभी, जोग जज्ञ आचार |  
 राम नाम हिरदे धरो, सहजो यही विचार ||  
 चौरासी के दुख छटें, छप्पन नर्क तरास |  
 राम नाम ले सहजिया, जमपुर मिले ना बास ||  
 काम क्रोध लोभ मोह मद, तजि भेज हरि को नाम |  
 निश्चै सहजो मुक्ति भवे, लहै अमरपुर धाम ||

Laakh chauraasee yah kahee, pher pher bhugatant |  
 Janam maran chhoote nahin, bina saran bhagavant ||  
 Jagy daan teerath karai, pooja bhaanti anek |  
 Mukti na paave sahajiya, bina bhakti hari ek ||  
 Indar kee padavee milai, aur brahma kee aab |  
 Aage to bhee maran hai, sahajo sakal bahaav ||  
 Naam le sahajiya, deejai sarb akor |  
 Teen lok ke raaj lon, ant jaahuge chhor ||  
 Bina bhakti thothe sabhee, jog jagy aachaar |  
 Raam naam hirade dharo, sahajo yahee vichar ||  
 Chaurasee ke duhkh chhaten, chhappan nark taraas |  
 Raam naam le sahajiya, jamapur mile na baas ||  
 Kaam krodh lobh moh mad, taji bhej hari ko naam |  
 Nischai sahajo mukti bhavai, lahai amarapur dhaam ||

*Sahjo says that without devotion to God, one has to suffer again and again in 84 Yonies. One cannot get salvation from birth and death without the mercy of God. One can do many Yagya, charity, travelling to pilgrimage but cannot attain salvation without devotion to Hari. One can attain the status of Indra (highest position in society), the position of Brahma, death is still inevitable. The only path to peace is to chant the name of Ram and give up anger. One may gain the kingdom of the three worlds, but without God's mercy, ultimately, he will be defeated. Without*

*devotion, all Yoga, knowledge and meditation are futile. Chant the name of Ram in your heart and the sorrows of the eighty-four Yonies will be dispelled and one will be free from the cycle of death and birth. Chanting the name of Ram will save you from going to hell. Give up lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride and chant the name of Hari. Sahajho says that you will surely attain salvation and the abode of immortality.*

Mother Sahajho places great importance to the love of God. Love for God, service to the people and devotion to God are the only things that can lead to union with God and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Sahajho believes that chanting of mantras can lead to knowledge, but you may not get God and salvation.

प्रेम दिवाने जो भए, मन भयो चकनाचूर |  
छके रहे घूमत रहें, सहजो देख हज़ूर ||  
प्रेम दिवाने जो भए, पलट गयो सब रूप |  
सहजो दृष्टि ना आवै, कहा रंक का भूष ||  
प्रेम दिवाने जो भए, जाति बरन गई छूट |  
सहजो जग बौरा कहै, लोग गए सब फूट ||  
प्रेम लटक दुर्लभ महा, पावे गुरु के ध्यान |  
अजपा सुमिरन कहत हूँ, उपजे केवल ज्ञान ||

Prem divaane jo bhe, man bhayo chakanaachoor |  
Chhake rahe ghoomat rahen, sahajo dekh hazoor ||  
Prem divaane jo bhae, palat gayo sab roop |  
Sahajo drshti na aavai, kaha rank ka bhoop ||  
Prem divaane jo bhae, jaati baran gae chhoot |  
Sahajo jag baura kahai, log gae sab phoot ||  
Prem latak durlabh maha, paave guru ke dhyaan |  
Ajapa sumiran kahat hoon, upaje keval gyaan ||

When one becomes mad in love with God, his/her mind does not find peace (without seeing God). He/she remains dazed and wanders around. He/she cannot differentiate between the king of the pauper. The caste and creed have no meaning for him/her. The people of the world may call him/her as mad. People may not have any respect for him/her. Love to God is very rare which can be attained only through the grace of the Guru. Sahjo says that through silent meditation, only knowledge can be gained but one cannot find God.

Mother Sahajo has given a masterful explanation of both the Nirgun and Sagun forms of God. Mother Sahajo says that the Nirgun Lord assumes the Sagun form to save the devotees. Therefore, remember the Sagun God and cross this ocean of worldly affairs.

निराकार आकार सब, निर्गुण और गुणवंत |  
है नांही सूँ रहित है, सहजो यों भगवंत ||  
नाम नहीं औ नाम सब, रूप नहीं सब रूप |  
सहजो सब कुछ ब्रह्म है, हरि प्रगट हरि गूँप ||  
वही आप परगट भयो, ईसुर लीला धार |  
मांहि अजुध्या और ब्रज, कौतिक किए अपार ||  
भक्त हेतु हरि आइया, पिरथी भार उतारि |  
साधन की रच्छा करी, पापी डारे मारि ||  
निर्गुन सूँ सर्गुन भए, भक्त उधारनहार |  
सहजो की दण्डौत है, ताकूँ बारम्बार ||  
गीता में श्री कृष्ण ने, वचन कहे सब खोल |  
सब जीवन में मैं बसूँ कै चर कहा अडोल ||  
मैं अखंड व्यापक सकल, सहज रहा भर पूर |  
ज्ञानी पावे निकट ही, मूरख जाने दूर ||

जोगी पावे जोग सँ, ज्ञानी लहै विचार |  
 सहजो पावे भक्ति सँ, जा के प्रेम आधार ||  
 धन्य जसोदा नन्द धन्य, धन्य ब्रजमंडल देस |  
 आदि निरंजन सहजिया, भयो ग्वाल के भेस ||

Niraakaar aakaar sab, nirgun aur gunavant |  
 Hai naanhee soon rahit hai, sahajo yon bhagavant ||  
 Naam nahin au naam sab, roop nahin sab roop |  
 Sahajo sab kuchh brahm hai, hari pragat Hari gup ||  
 Sahee aap paragat bhayo, eesur leela dhaar |  
 Maanhi ajudhya aur braj, kautik kie apaar ||  
 Bhakt hetu hari aaiya, pirathee bhaar utaari |  
 Saadhan kee rachchha karee, paapee daare maari ||  
 Nirgun soon sargun bhe, bhakt udhaaranahaar |  
 Sahajo kee dandaut hai, taakoon baarambaar ||  
 Gita mein Shree Krshn ne, vachan kahe sab khol |  
 Sab jeevan mein main basoon, kai char kaha adol ||  
 Main akhand vyaapak sakal, sahaj raha bhar poor |  
 Gyaanee paave nikat hee, moorakh jaane door ||  
 Jogee paave jog soon, gyaanee lahai vichaar |  
 Sahajo paave bhakti soon, ja ke prem aadhaar ||  
 Dhany jasoda nand dhany, dhany brajamandal des |  
 Aadi Niranjan sahajiya, bhayo gvaal ke bhes ||

*The God whether He is formless or with form, He is full of true qualities. He is in all shapes and devoid of all shapes. He is with name or without name. There is no definite form for God. He is in all forms. Sahajo pays obeisances to Hari. Lord Krfishna says in Gita that He is all pervading. He performed divine play as Iswar in earth. In Ayodhya as Ram and in Braj as Krishna, He performed immense Leelas (divine plays). Hari took incarnation on earth for the devotees to relieve the burden of the earth. He protected the Sints and and killed the sinners. He became Sagun from Nirgun for the sake of devotees. Sahjo says thazt she bows to Him again and again. In the Gita, Shri Krishna spoke openly. He resides in all lives. He is all-pervasive, and remain always in peaced. The wise find Him near,*

*but the foolish think He is too far. The Yogi finds me through Yoga. The wise find Him through knowledge. But Sahajo finds Him devotion. Blessed is Yashoda, blessed is Nanda, blessed is the land of Braj Mandal, where He did Leel in the form of a cowherd.*

Mother Sahajo Bai is so engrossed in the love of Krishna that she plays Holi with him only.

मैं तो खेलूं प्रभु के संग, होरी रंग भरी |  
जित देखूं तित रमि रहौ रे, सब में व्यापक है हरी ||  
सब कुछ भयो दियो सुख जिन कूँ, अद्भुत लीला है करी |  
नाना जतन किए मिलवे कूँ, प्रीतम पायो हम घरी ||  
पावत ही सब भ्रम भय भागे, आवागमन छूटी लरी |  
जीवन मुक्त भयो मन मोरो, ब्याधा सब आसा जरी ||  
अमर लोक पद फगुवा पैवे, जनम मरन बिपता दली |  
चरणदास गुरु किरपा कीन्हे, सहजो हिय आनंद हली ||

Main to kheloon prabhu ke sang, horee rang bharee |  
Jit dekhon tit rami rahau re, sab mein vyaapak hai haree ||  
Sab kuch bhayo diyo sukh jin koon, adbhut leela hai kari |  
Nana jatan kie milave koon, preetam paayo ham gharee ||  
Pavat hi sab bhram bhay bhage, aavagaman chhoote lari |  
Jeevan mukt bhayo man moro, byaadha sab aasa jaree ||  
Amar lok pad phaguva paive, janam maran bipata dalee |  
Charanadas guru kirapa keenhe, sahajo hiy aanand halee ||

*Sahjo says that she plays colourful Holi with the Lord only. Wherever she looks, He is present, Hari is omnipresent. He has given her all the happiness and has performed wonderful miracles in her life. After making many efforts, she found her beloved God. On finding Him, all the illusions and fears of Sahjo went away. She was freed from the cycle of birth and death. Her mind became free. Charandas, her Guru, did mercy on her and her heart was filled with joy.*

Mother Sahajo Bai has beautifully depicted the leela of Hari in this verse.

तेरी लीला अधिक सुहावनी |  
देखि देखि मन हुलसत है, संतन के मन भावनी ||  
तत गुन करि ब्रह्मण्ड बनाया, अधर धरयो अचरज भयो |  
जाके मध्य यही संसारा, भांति भांति रंग रंग हयो ||  
सात दीप नौ खंड रचे हैं, स्वर्ग नरक पाताल हीं |  
इच्छा करत सबै बन आयो, होए गया तत्काल हीं ||  
माया अगम अपार तुम्हारी, बरन सके कहाँ बेद है |  
तीन गुनन तक बुध पहुँचत है, परे तुम्हारो भेद है ||  
छिन में उत्पति परलय छिन में, जो चाहो सब कुछ बनै |  
चरणदास गुरु दृष्टि देइ जब, गुनाबाद सहजो बनै ||

Teree leela adhik suhaavane |  
Dekhi dekhi man hulasat hai, santan ke man bhaavane ||  
Tat gun kari brahmand banaaya, adhar dharayo acharaj bhayo |  
Jaake madhy yahi sansaara, bhaanti bhaanti rang rang hayo ||  
Saat deep nau khand rache hain, svarg narak paataal heen |  
Ichchha karat sabai ban aayo, hoe gaya tatkaal heen ||  
Maaya agam apaar tumhaaree, baran sake kahaan bed hai |  
Teen gunan tak budh pahunchat hai, pare tumhaaro bhed hai ||  
Chin mein utpati paralay chin mein, jo chaaho sab kuch banai |  
Charanadaas guru drshti dei jab, gunaabaad sahajo banai ||

*Sahjo says that o Lord, Your leela is very pleasant. Seeing Your Leela, the mind rejoices. You created the universe by virtue and You are amazing. You created many kinds of colors. You created seven Islands and nine sections of earth, heaven and hell. You desired to create and these all were created by your Yoga powers. Your Maya is incomprehensible and immense which even Vedas cannot describe. The wise can recognise three qualities, but not You. In one moment, You create the Universe and in another moment, You destroy. You achieve*

*whatever you want. When Guru Charandas gave me vision, I found the wisdom to find God.*

Thus, by composing countless verses Mata Sahajo Bai became immortal.

## Lord Krishna Darshan and Samadhi

Look at the miracle of Guru devotion of Maa Sahajo Bai that Lord Krishna Himself gave her darshan. One afternoon, when Sahajo Bai was preparing food for Gurudev Saint Charan Das Ji, Lord Krishna Himself appeared before her in the form of a young celibate.

‘O Mother, I am very hungry, give me some food,’ the words of a brahmachari were heard by the Mother.

Hearing the voice of a brahmachari, the mother came out of her room. She recognized Him with her divine vision that this brahmcharee was none other than Lord Krishna Himself. She was verty happy that God Himself had come to her door, but why this contrivance? Why Hed has come in a celibate form? Why did not my Kanhaiya come in front of me playing the Muri?

Mother thought, ‘OK, no problem. May the Lord be pleased or displeased, I will also have some fun with Him today. If He is upset and angry, Gurudev is there to persuade Him and be pleased.

Sahajo Bai said, ‘O Brahmachari, you will surely get food. Gurudev is coming soon for food. It is summer time and it is very hot today. You can fan him to provide coolness while he is eating. When Gurudev's meal is over, I will give you food too. But remember that you should not come in front of Gurudev, just fan him from a distance.’

Mother Sahajo knew that if Lord Himself came before Gurudev in the form of a celibate, he would immediately recognize Him and her game would be spoiled.

Look at the love of God towards His devotee.

The celibate said, ‘That is all, Mother. It will be my great privilege to have an opportunity to serve Gurudev.’

Gurudev came for food on time. Sensing a strange smell in the hut, he said to Sahajo, 'Sahajo, where is this smell coming from? What flower did you bring for offering today that smells so good?'

The innocent Sahajo cannot lie to Gurudev. She was thinking what reply should she give to Gurudev. Gurudev Charan Das was a great divine Saint with perfect divine vision. He recognised Kanha and said, 'Kanhaiya, there is no need for You tgo to hide. Please come in the open.'

On hearing Saintg's voice, God appeared. Saint Ji and after that Sahajo bowed to Him. Both, the devotee Saint and the Lord ate food then with love.

After the meal, the Lord said to the Mother, 'Sahajo, I am very pleased with your devotion to the Guru. Ask for a boon.'

Sahajo said, 'O Lord, you have given me Gurudev. I have no wishes anymore.'

The Lord placed His hand on her head with pleasure and said, 'Sahajo, you are another form of Saraswati. I am always with you. In this life, you should serve the people by following the path shown by Saint Charan Das Ji with devotion. I will personally come to pick you up in the plane for Saket Dham at the time of your samadhi.'

The Lord kept His promise. After the samadhi of Guru Sant Shiromani Shri Charan Das in 1782,, Sahajo Bai came to Vrindavan and established her Ashram there. Absorbed in the devotion of Lord Krishna, on 24 January 1805, Bhaktimati Sahajo Bai renounced her body in Vrindavan. It is said that at that time a bright light was experienced and the sound of the plane was heard by the people. Mother Sahajo Bai went to Saket Dham in the plane with the Lord.



## OBJECTIVES OF SHRI RAM KATHA SANSTHAN PERTH (INC)

Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth (Inc) is a Vaishnav non-profit religious organisation based on the principles established by Bhagwan Swami Shri Ramananda Ji Acharya (14<sup>th</sup> century).

- Shri Sansthan is non-discriminatory to any religion, caste, sex and social status of the devotees. Its main principle is, 'Hari Ko Bhaje, So Hari Ko Hoi', the one who worships the Lord, is dear to the Lord.
- Shri Sansthan believes that the worship of the Lord with pure heart and unselfish attitude is very dear to the Lord. All the devotees of the Lord are brothers and sisters.

### **Concept of Brahman (Supreme)**

- Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations are the 'Supreme Brahman'. They are omnipresent and preserver of the Universe.

### **Concept of Jiva (Soul)**

- The existence of Jiva (Soul) is dependent on Brahman. Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations (Brahman) are the means to achieve salvation (Moksha). Their eternal and omnipresence help Jiva to move forward towards the achievement of salvation (Moksha).

### **Concept of Maya (Illusion)**

- Maya is the cause of Prakrati (Nature/ World). Prakrati is the combination of three Gunas (Qualities) - Sat, Raj and Tamas. By these three Guns, Prakrati creates the world. Maya is controlled by Brahman. Brahman (Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations) alone can provide salvation from Maya.

### **Concept of Moksha (Salvation)**

- The abode of Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations is 'Saket-Dham'. By meditating on and praying Lord Ram, Mother Sita and their incarnations, the devotees get salvation (Moksh) and never come back into this world. The cycle of birth and death is eradicated forever.

- Shri Sansthan continues to publish religious books, booklets, magazines etc to fulfil these objectives. Time to time, Shri Sansthan also organises Shri Ram Katha and other religious Kathaen (stories) of the great Sanatan Rishies, Devs, Devis and great devotees.



**Dr. Yatendra Sharma**, the author of this book, was born in a Sanatan Dharma Hindu family. Following his family traditions, he developed an interest in reading, listening, and narrating religious scriptures since his childhood. He learnt Sanskrit in his childhood from his grandfather Shri Bhagwan Das Ji and Shri Saligram Sharma Agnihotri Ji, the great scholar of Sanskrit and retired Principal of Naravar Sanskrit Mahavidyalay. He completed his Doctorate in chemical technology from the Technical University of Graz, Austria, and now serving the mining and mineral industry of Western Australia for more than three decades.

In 2016, with the help of some like-minded friends, he founded a religious organisation 'Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth', based on the teachings of Bhagwan Swami Ramananda Ji Acharya Maharaj, and following the traditions of 'Shri Ramanandi Sampraday'. Shri Ram Katha Sansthan Perth is continually publishing books and booklets on the life stories of the great Sanatan Dharma Saints, Devs, Devis etc, to create awareness about the Sanatan Dharma culture to the followers of Sanatan Dharma.



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