



## Story of King Bharat

India is our forefather's land. It is also our spiritual land where our Dharma, Hindu Dharma, flourished. India's true and ancient name is Bharat. Do you know how our spiritual land was named as "Bharat"?

Well!!! There lived a great and brave king namely Bharat. Our spiritual land was named after him. There is a wonderful story about the birth of king Bharat.

Bharat was the son of a king Dushyant and Shakuntala. Dushyant was the king of Hastinapur; and ancestors of kaurava and pandavas. Once, hunting in the forest, he saw a beautiful lady Shakuntala. He married to her as both liked each other. Then, King Dushyant had to leave for his kingdom. He promised Shakuntala that he would come later and take her to his kingdom Hastinapur.

Then, somehow, King Dushyant completely forgot Shakuntala. He did not even recognise Shakuntala when she went to Hastinapur to see him. Thereafter, sad and disheartened Shakuntala started living with sage Marich in his ashram. Here, unknown to King Dushyant, She gave birth to a son named Bharat. He was a very brave child. He was not afraid of anyone or anything. Bharat played with lion cubs everyday.



Dushyant had forgotten his wife Shakuntala and had no idea that he had a son. Once, Dushyant happened to pass by the ashram. He watched a little boy playing with a lion cub. The boy opened the lion's jaws by his hands and said, "O king of the jungle ! Open your mouth wide, so I can count your teeth." Dushyant was very astonished by the child's bravery.

Later Shakuntala came there and Dushyant realised that Bharat was his son. He was overjoyed at this and hugged Bharat lovingly. Dushyant took Shakuntala and Bharat along with him to Hastinapur. Later Bharat grew into a great king. Our country's true name is Bharat (pronounced Bhaarat), named after him. Bharat is remembered by all for his bravery.





## Story of Vrikasura and Lord Vishnu

The wicked asura (demon) Vrika, once happened to meet Sage Narada on the way and enquired "O! Maharishi! Which of the trinity (Lord Shiva, Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma) is most easily pleased? Smart Narada knew his motive. He quickly replied, "Lord Shiva is very kind and easy to please. Once he is pleased, he grants any boon."

Highly pleased Vrikasura immediately rushed off to distant Kedara mountain (Lord Shiva's place), lit a holy fire, cut off a little flesh from his body and offered it as sacrifice to Shiva. He went on repeating this until on the seventh day, when no more flesh was left. At last, he was about to cut off his head to be thrown in the fire, Lord Shiva appeared and held his hand "Why all this gruesome sacrifice my friend? I would have been pleased even by a handful of water offered with devotion. Ask what you want". With folded hands and apparent modesty Vrikasura said, "Lord! Let any one whom I touch on the head, fall down dead." Lord Shiva was aghast at this terrible request but a word once given must be honoured; so rather unwillingly Lord Shiva said "Be it so!"

With the boon of Lord Shiva, Vrikasura became strong and invincible. He started killing his enemies by just touching their head. Evil Vrikasura now wanted to attack Lord Shiva too. Knowing his motive, Lord Shiva went to Lord Vishnu and requested him to punish Vrikasura.

Lord Vishnu took the form of a brahmin. When HE came across the Vrikasura, HE asked him, "Hey! Vrikasura! Where are you going? What is the matter?". Vrikasura expressed his desires of destroying Lord Shiva. The brahmin was incredulous "Haven't you heard that Lord Shiva, as a result of Daksha's curse, has lost his powers? His boon given to you is also not effective now!!". Surprised Vrikasura said, "Hey Vishnu! I dont believe you. You are fooling me!" Lord Vishnu replied, "Why don't you then test it by trying it on yourself?" This was said in such a plausible disarming manner that the foolish Vrikasura immediately put his hand on his own head which split in two. And he fell down dead split in two halves.

This is how Lord Vishnu fooled Vrikasura and saved the world from his shackles. Lord Vishnu and other Gods showered flowers and praised him for punishing Vrikasura.





## Story of Gajendra and Lord Vishnu

Once upon a time, a king named Indradyumn ruled the southern part of Bharat (India). He was a great worshipper of Lord Vishnu. He decided to retire from his duties and spend full time in worshipping God. He convened a meeting with his ministers and told them, "I have decided to retire to the forest and devote all my time to the worship of the Lord. I am sure you are capable of running the kingdom in my absence." Hearing this news, the ministers were shocked but could not change the king's mind.

Soon the king Indradyumn handed over all his responsibilities to the ministers and headed to the Malaya Parvat (mountain). He built a cottage there and started meditating.

One day Sage Agastya came that way with his disciples. The sage saw that the king was engaged in prayers silently, on the contrary he should have been fulfilling his responsibilities of his kingdom. So the sage felt that the king was not following his duties. Hence, he got angry and cursed the king: "This king has not received proper preaching from his teachers. He is selfish and has taken up whimsical actions. He has a mind as dull as an elephant. So may he turn in to an elephant."

Thus, cursing the king, Sage Agastya left. King Indradyumn became an elephant. He joined a herd of elephants. Soon other elephants accepted him as a king. he became the king of elephants because of his virtues. All elephants proclaimed loudly, "We salute you O King Gajendra!!"

One day, the king Indradyumna (now an elephant) said to the other elephants, "lets go to the Trikut Mountains. It is a better place to live." Other Elephants, "we will follow you anywhere O King."

Soon they reached the Trikut mountain. There, they saw a lake. Before entering the lake, the elephants quenched their thirst and then took bath in it. Then taking a lot of water in his trunk, Gajendra began to sprinkle it over his fellow elephants.

Unfortunately there was a crocodile sleeping at the bottom of the lake. He woke up angrily, "Who dared to disturb my sleep? I am going to teach them a lesson so that they will remember next time." The furious crocodile saw the elephants and began to swim towards them.



The elephants saw the crocodile coming towards them. They quickly came out of the water but the Gajendra could not. The crocodile caught the Gajendra's leg. The Gajendra cried panickly, "ouch! What's that? I can't move my leg. Please somebody help me." He saw that it was a crocodile who grabbed his leg. The Gajendra tried his best to shrug off the crocodile but in vain.

Hearing their King all other elephants hurriedly came to help him. "Don't worry O Gajendra we will release you in a minute. It is only a crocodile."

But, inspite of all their efforts, they could not set Gajendra free. They too tired and gave up. The crocodile continued to grow stronger. Finally the Gajendra dedicated himself to the Lord Vishnu and began to pray: O omnipresent Lord, I salute you. You are the protector of all the beings, kindly protect me. O Almighty, as the sea is the ultimate refuge of all the waters, you are the ultimate refuge for all the creatures. Every creature takes shelter under your Kripa (kindness). O sea of kindness, you make no delay in the welfare of your devotees. I salute you. I am in your refuge. O Lord, protect me".



The Lord Vishnu appeared there at once. Gajendra saw Lord Vishnu. Though being in trouble and pain, he forgot his pain for a moment and picked up a beautiful lotus in his trunk and said to Lord Vishnu: "O Lord, kindly accept my greetings". Looking at Gajendra's devotion, Lord Vishnu smiled. Along with Gajendra, He pulled the crocodile out of the lake and punished it by His Sudarshan chakra, and thus freed Gajendra.

Happy Gajendra touched Lord Vishnu's feet and said, "Hey Lord! I became elephant because of sage Agastya's curse. Please free me from his curse." Lord Vishnu blessed, "So be it!!"

Thus, with the blessing of Lord Vishnu, Gajendra again became the King Indradyumn and returned back to his kingdom. He continued fulfilling his responsibilities towards his kingdom and people and also continued worshipping Lord Vishnu.

