



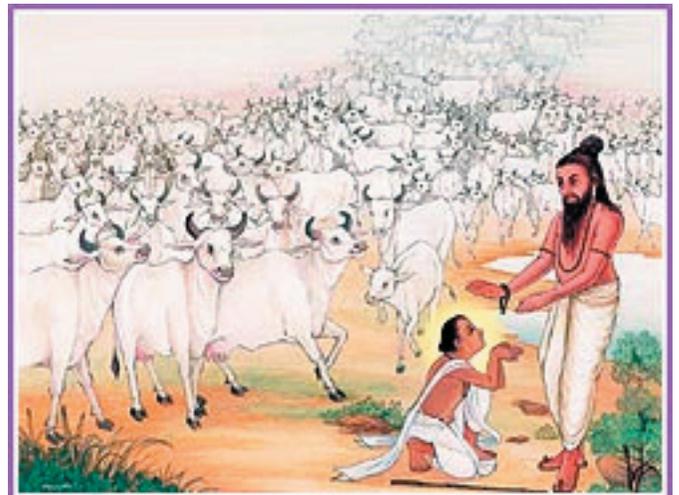
Story of Satyakam

Satyakam was the son of a woman named Jabal. He had a strong wish to study and so he left home in search of a guru. He went to the ashram of sage Gautam and requested him to make him his pupil. Gautam questioned him, "Before I make you my pupil, I need to know about your family." This puzzled Satyakam, as he had no idea about his family except his mother. But to join the ashram he would not lie. He told the sage that he would ask his mother. So he went to Jabal.

His mother told him, "Go to the sage and tell him 'I am the son of Jabal and my name is Satyakam Jabali'." Satyakam went to Gautam and told him what he knew. The sage was pleased with his love for truth, honesty and accepted him as his pupil.

Sage Gautam wanted to test Satyakam's patience and his desire to learn. One day he told Satyakam, "Satyakam! take the herd of 400 weak and ill cows of the ashram, nurture them well and return back when they grew to 1000. Upon your return, I shall start your education." Satyakam knew that sage Gautam was testing his patience. Without uttering a single word he left with the cows. He took them to the forest and looked after them with loving care.

Satyakam built an ashram for himself in the forest and nurtured cows with full dedication. He also followed all the rules and duties of brahmachari. Years went by. The number of cows increased to 1000. Each and every cow was strong and healthy. Satyakam had fulfilled sage Gautam's wish. It was a time for Satyakam to return back to ashram and start education.



All the gods and deities were happy with Satyakam's obedience and dedication to his guru. On his way back to Ashram, Satyakam stopped at one place to take a night-halt and lighted a fire to warm himself. During that night, he was blessed with the sacred knowledge of Vedas and Shastras by Agni (fire). On the following evening, Satyakam stayed near a lake alongwith cows where he was blessed and enlightened by a swan. Similarly, he was also enlightened by a bull and a waterfowl.

Now enlightened Satyakam returned back to the sage Gautam's ashram with all 1000 cows. Sage Gautam saw the glow of enlightenment on his face. He was surprised. He was also very happy that Satyakam had looked after the cows very well. He asked Satyakam, "Child! your face shines like a scholar. Who taught you?" Satyakam told him about his four teachers and what they taught him.

After settling down, Satyakam respectfully requested sage Gautam, "Teacher! According to your wish, I have come back with 1000 cows. Now, please teach me." Gautam replied, "Child! I have nothing to teach what you don't know. You are already enlightened by your four teachers. In fact, now you are more knowledgeable than me. I bless you!!"





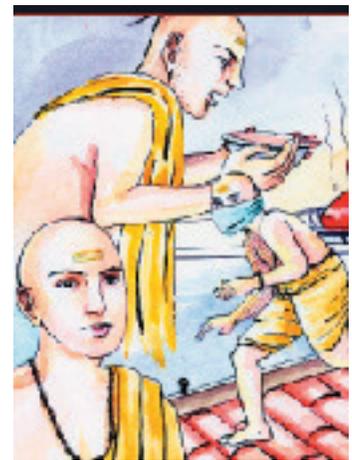
Story of Ajamil

There lived a Brahmin named Ajamil. He was an exponent of the Shastras. He was always found in the company of people with saintly nature and good conduct.

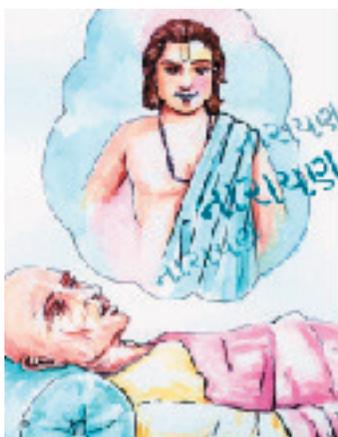
However, with the passage of time, Ajamil started making friends with people having bad habits. As a result of bad influence, Ajamil started stealing money from his house besides indulging in gambling.

Ajamil underwent a big change in a very short period of time. He resorted to telling lies, stealing, eating meat and not to mention, he became an alcoholic too.

Thus, many years passed by. He had a little son. His name was Narayan. He was the apple of Ajamil's eyes. Ajamil had not become an old man. He became so weak that he was unable to get up from his bed. He was awaiting his death desperately.



During this phase of his life, his son Narayan, did not fade from his memory. He kept on saying "Narayan Narayan" repeatedly. Thus he would utter 'Narayan' the name of Lord Vishnu, very frequently throughout the day.



Ajamil, as a result of frequently calling out Narayan, gradually underwent a change. He started recollecting his devotion and prayers to Lord Vishnu during his prime. He repented for all his wrong deeds and vices.

Ajamil who had come so close to death, now started recovering from his illness. He spent the rest of his life in the service of God. When he was on his deathbed, God himself came to take him and thus Ajamil was purified of all the sins that he had once committed.





Story of Sage Valmiki

A long time ago, the robber, named Ratnakar, used to live in the forest. He robbed and sometimes even killed those who passed through that forest. In fact, Ratnakar was a person from a respectable and good family. His parents lived in a small hut nearby in the forest. However, Ratnakar had total apathy towards education. He also fell into bad company. This led him to commit thefts and murder for which he did not even feel guilty. Ratnakar's parents, shocked at his behaviour, soon died in despair.

In course of time, Ratnakar got married and had children. Thereafter he realized that it was difficult to feed them. He began robbing the travellers and even killed those who resisted him. To keep count of how many people he killed, he dropped a small pebble in a big drum for each victim. He spent years in robbing people, killing them and satisfying the needs of his family.

One day Ratnakar hid behind a tree and waiting for a victim. All of a sudden he heard melodious tune of the veena (a musical instrument). The traveller was playing the veena and also chanting - 'Narayan, Narayan' - in a sweet voice. The traveller was nobody, but Narad Muni (sage). The next moment Narad Muni appeared before him.

"Hey, Narayan! Or whoever you are! Where are you going? No one can go further. I am going to kill you," said Ratnakar. Narad Muni asked calmly, "Kill me? But why?"

Ratnakar replied, "I earn my livelihood by robbing and killing travellers. Have a look at this drum. I have killed as many people as there are stones in it."

"How terrible! You have committed terrible sins by killing the innocent."

"Sin? What sin? I do this to bring up my children, to support my family" Ratnakar retorted.

"How can you say so? You must do as I say; go home and ask them as to who from your family, is ready to share your sin of killing the innocent."

"There is no need to ask them. I am sure they will say 'yes, we are with you.'"

"You are under a wrong impression. Go and ask them."

"Oh! So you imagine you are going to escape from here while I am away?"

"No, no, not at all. I swear by the name of Narayan, whom I worship, that I shall not budge from here till you return."

Ratnakar somehow believed Narad Muni's words and reached home.

"Father, what have you brought for us today?" asked his wife and children eagerly.

"Be patient. Answer my question first. So far I have killed many people and looted the dead, to satisfy your needs.

Though these were sinful acts, I committed them entirely for you. Therefore, are you ready to share my sins?" Ratnakar was talking to them seriously.

"What nonsense! We never asked you to kill people. It is your duty to support us. You could have done it in any other way. You did not commit sins on our advice. So the question of sharing them does not arise at all."

Ratnakar was completely shattered on knowing that none in his family was going to share his sins. He returned back to Narad Muni.

"O great Rishi! You have taught me a lesson. All are with us in times of prosperity but none in adverse circumstances.

I really repent for killing innocent people. Now you must be my redeemer and save my soul," Ratnakar pleaded with him, grieving all the while.

Narad Muni assured him in an affectionate manner.

"Don't be so disheartened, Ratna. Your repentance has already started lessening your sins. A person certainly changes for better if his heart is filled with remorse. Now do one thing. Chant 'Ram, Ram' non-stop. You will be free from all your earlier sins."

Ratnakar vowed to do accordingly.

"O great sage! I will obey your order. I will stop robbing people from this very instant. Now I shall do nothing but chant Shree Ram's name. I am grateful to you for showing me the right path."

Ratnakar's mind and approach towards life was completely changed.

Afterwards chanting 'Narayan, Narayan,' Narad Muni proceeded on his way.

