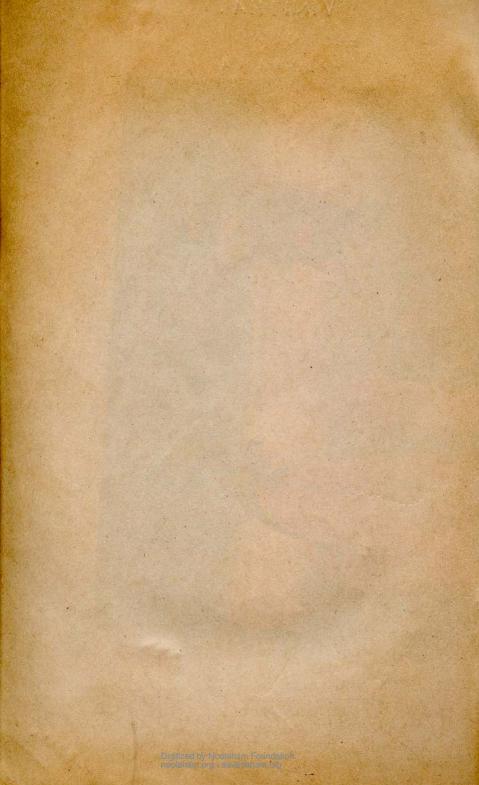


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Greek Myths and Other Legends

by Goolbai Gunasekara and Nirmali Hettiarachchi

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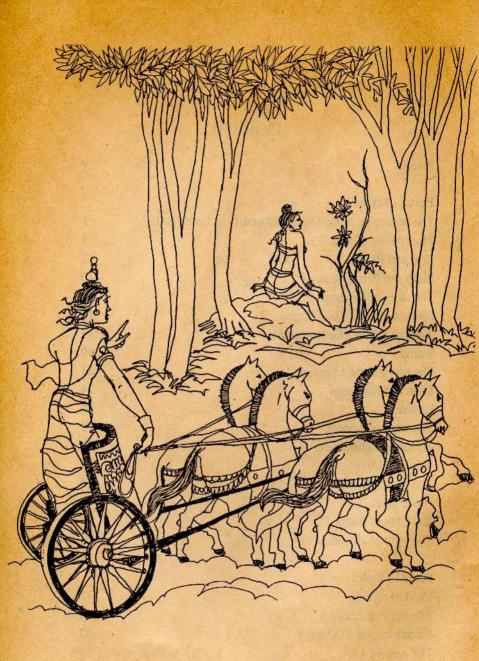
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Pluto and Persephone

PREFACE

Right from the beginning of mankind's history, even from the time the earliest men lived in caves, people have wondered about the mysteries of the universe. Primitive man tried to explain the wonders of nature as best he could. Very probably this is how mythology began. Today, any old legends or stories that cannot be proved to be true are called myths. However, we must remember that primitive man believed in these stories. Very often they were part of his religion.

Primitive people stood in awe of the power of nature. They worshipped the sun because it was the giver of life and light. They worshipped water and trees because these were also very important in their daily life. Myths deal with these elements and are also colourful ways of explaining things like the beginning of the world, the creation of man, the discovery of fire etc.

When studying mythology we study the working of the primitive human mind. We must remember that in those days there were no scientific theories to explain life. In a way mythology is the very beginning of science because it grew from the questioning minds of early human beings.

It is difficult to give an exact definition of the word 'myth'. We can say it is "a special sort of traditional tale". There is no one standard or orthodox version of a myth. The very fact that they are so old and have been handed down from generation to generation leads us to believe that myths may have altered along the way.

Very often myths are an exaggeration or an enlargement of ordinary life. Sometimes things which are not possible in real life happen in myths. Sometimes the dark fantasies of the human mind find expression in myths. Murder of one's relations and loved ones, incest, and other secret crimes which people normally do not speak about openly are in myths.

The word legend has various meanings today. It is a kind of folk tale and so, like a myth, belongs to the family of stories passed down

by word of mouth. What makes a legend slightly different is that many people believe there is some truth in it. A legend is often based on something that happened, perhaps a long time ago. Very often it is an extraordinary event and therefore, as it is handed down, many magical qualities are attached to it. Very often the magic grows with the telling of it. This is what makes legends so interesting.

This book begins with a selection of Greek myths, followed by two stories from the Bible, which formed part of the common heritage of both the Christian and the Muslim faiths. Some elements from Hindu mythology are also introduced, so that students have a base at least for further exploration on their own, that will help them to compare and contrast some of the essentials of the varying cultures that have contributed to modern day society.

The second part of the book consists of retellings of the epics that have been so important a part of the world's cultural heritage. The stories of the three great Western Classical epics, The Iliad, the Odyssey and the Aeneid are related, and then the two Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

Finally the book introduces the story of King Arthur of Britain, since that more modern legend was the inspiration for the most celebrated English epic, Tennyson's Idylls of the King.

One of the main aims of this book was to provide readers with the background to so much literary work in English. Classical and Christian myths and legends are fundamental to an understanding of much that has been written in English, even in Sri Lanka, and this book has been prepared so as to assist readers to understand more clearly a number of texts they will come across. Amongst those readily accessible that they should read are:

Words for Persephone, Penelope, Eve, Narcissus, This Other Eden and To my friend Aldred (from An Anthology of Contemporary Sri Lankan Poetry in English)

and

Philomela, Itylus, and The Garden of Proserpine (from A Selection of English Poetry).

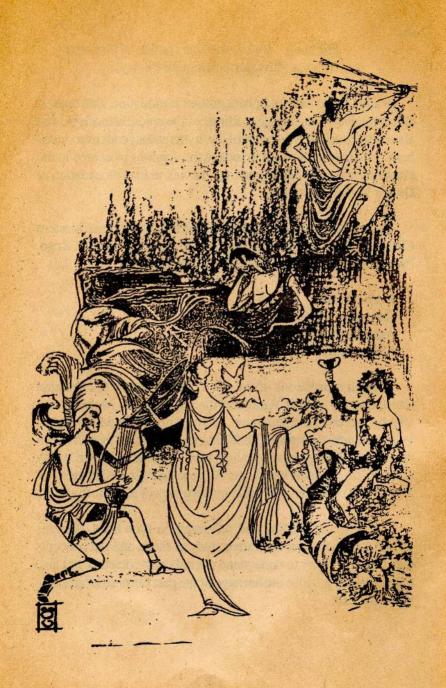
In addition to providing background information, this book is also intended to encourage readings of the epics themselves, and also of more detailed accounts of the myths and legends introduced here. Students are advised to look at the versions presented in the Penguin book of Greek Mythology, as well as in the translation of Ovid's Metamorphoses.

With regard to the epics, they should look at the three Western Classical epics, as well as Apollonius' Voyage of the Argo. Particular passages that will repay study are:

Iliad - Books 1, 22 - 24 Odyssey - Book 11 & 12 Aeneid - Books 2 & 6 Argonautica - Book 1.

Penguin translations of the above may be used. The Penguin translation, by Arthur Waley, of the Chinese epic Monkey will also be useful as a comparison. With regard to the Indian epics, William Buck's translation of the Ramayana makes very interesting reading, though other versions such as Rajagopalachari's may also suffice. Students should also look at Tennyson's Ulysses and Morte d' Arthur, to note more modern uses of the epic tradition.

In addition to reading and reflecting on such texts, students should also make a comparative study of them, and the concepts they convey - to try to understand not only past societies, but also today's society, since the heritage of the past plays so large a role in the present.



PART I-LEGENDS THE BEGINNING OF THE OLYMPIAN FAMILY OF GREEK GODS

From earliest times men believed in powers stronger than themselves. The ancient Greeks called these powers 'gods'. It is very interesting to note that the Greek gods were very much like human beings. They were described as looking like people and they behaved just as humans do. Thus they are called anthropomorphic. (This word is made up of the Greek words for 'man' and for 'form'.)

The Greek gods are said to have lived as one family on Mount Olympus. The story of the beginning of this family shows a strange mixture of ideas. It is an attempt at explaining the beginning of the world, mixed up with the primitive urge of a son to destroy his father.

According to Hesiod, one of the first Greek historians, in the beginning was Chaos - a vast, dark place of nothingness. Then Gaia, the earth, appeared. From Chaos was born the night and the day. Gaia's first child was Uranus, the sky, and she made him her equal. Then she created high mountains and the sea. The world had now been made and it needed people in it.

Gaia united with her son Uranus and produced the first race - the Titans. There were twelve of them, six male and six female. They were horrible monsters, some with only one eye in the middle of their foreheads. When Uranus saw his children he was horrified at their ugliness and shut them up at the bottom of the earth. Gaia was very sad and angry at what was done to her children. She planned her revenge and asked her children to help her to destroy their father. All except Chronos (which means Time) were afraid. He waited till his father slept and then took the sickle his mother had made, cut his father to pieces with it and threw them into the sea. From the terrible black blood that oozed out of Uranus were born the Furies, who the Greeks believed hounded sinners mercilessly.

Now Chronos was king and he released his brothers and sisters from the bottom of the earth and the work of creation went on. Night

gave birth to Doom and to Death and then to Sleep. Then came the Fates and many other qualities which human beings have, which were given the personalities of gods. Finally Chronos married his sister Rhea and they had six children, three sons and three daughters. Chronos had been told that one of his children would kill him so he swallowed each child as it was born.

Rhea was full of despair at the thought that all her children would die. When the time came for her to give birth to Zeus she begged her mother, Gaia, to help her. She gave birth to him in a cavern in far away Crete and Gaia took the baby and undertook to bring it up. Meanwhile Rhea wrapped up a stone in the baby's clothes and Chronos, thinking it was the baby, swallowed it.

Zeus grew up hidden from his father, in the forest of Ida. As soon as he grew to manhood he planned to punish his father. He got a magic potion from the goddess Metis and gave it to Chronos. This made him throw up his children and the stone he had swallowed. Then Zeus overpowered him and Chronos was driven from the earth and held in a place below the sea.

Zeus, his brothers and sisters lived on Mount Olympus and were the family of gods worshipped by the Greeks.

At about this time happened the strange and wonderful event which John Keats records in "Hyperion". From the seas and the mountains, from forests and streams, young gods and goddesses were born. Their eyes expressed knowledge, imagination and feeling. If we study the Greek gods we see that each of them owns a quality of human nature or of the world. For example Athene, born from the head of Zeus, is goddess of wisdom. Aphrodite is goddess of love. Apollo started off as the god of light. He then became god of prophecy and music and god of the shepherds. Artemis was the virgin goddess of hunting. Hermes was the messenger of the gods. Ares was the god of war. Neptune was the god of the sea. There are many many other gods, each having a different function.

THE COMING OF MAN

There are many explanations given by the Greeks for the creation of man. One of the most colourful is the story of Prometheus.

Prometheus was one of the Titans, the race that existed in Chronos' time, before the younger generation of gods took over. It is said that he took some clay and made little figures which he then gave life to. These were the first human beings. (It is interesting to note that many myths describe man as being made from clay. Perhaps this is because primitive man realised that all his basic needs of food came from the soil.) Human beings were supposed to be just like the gods but smaller and they did not have magic powers. Also they were not immortal.

There is another belief that men were on the earth for a very long time. There were several ages in man's history. The first was the Golden Age, during the reign of Chronos, when men lived like gods, free from worry and weariness. Then came the Silver Age when there lived a race of men who were very weak and did everything their mothers told them to! (History tells us that at this time the main figure in a family was the mother and the family line came down from the females. This kind of society is known as a matriarchal society.) The men of the Silver Age learned how to grow many things and how to rear animals. (This was probably the time when man began settling down and setting up the first small cities.)

Next came the Bronze Age, during which the men were strong warriors. They were always fighting each other. (Perhaps this is the time they had to defend the cities they had built.) During this age many metals were discovered and many weapons were made.

Some old historians say that the Iron Age came after the Bronze Age. This was when men were very unhappy and there was no law and order. But Hesiod says that after the Bronze Age came the Heroic Age when brave warriors fought at Thebes and at Troy. Most of the great Greek heroes like Oedipus, Achilles, Hector, Ulysses and Agamemnon belonged to this age.

As long as Chronos reigned men were almost equal to the gods. But Zeus liked to dominate men. He wanted great sacrifices and punished those who did not do as he wished.

A meeting of gods and men was held to decide which part of a hunted animal was due to the gods as a sacrifice. Prometheus took the good cuts of meat and wrapped them up in the skin of the animal. He then piled the bones and put a thick layer of fat over them to make them look good. Zeus reached for the shining layer of fat but when he saw the bones underneath he was angry. He punished man by not giving him the gift of fire.

Prometheus had taught men all the arts and crafts of life - how to plough the earth and grow corn; how to build houses and make tools; how to catch and tame wild animals and how to make use of these animals for their work. But all this was slow work without fire. Without fire meat had to be eaten raw, tools could only be made of stone, the home could not be kept warm in winter and bread could not be baked. Prometheus decided to get fire for man.

There are two stories that tell of how Prometheus got fire. One says he was invited to a great feast of the gods at Mt. Olympus and there he stole a spark of fire and brought it down to man.

The other story relates how he stole fire from the sun. The early Greeks believed that the sun was drawn by winged horses on its journey round the earth. Prometheus is said to have climbed the eastern mountains where the chariot stood ready to start the day, and to have lit his torch from the sun's fire. (The Olympic torch which is carried at the beginning of the Olympic games is a reminder of Prometheus bringing his precious gift to man.)

Now Prometheus began to teach men the uses of fire. He showed them how to melt bronze and iron to make better weapons. He showed them how to cook meat and bake bread. Now they could keep themselves warm in winter.

Zeus was indeed angry when he saw how Prometheus had tricked him. "Titan!" he cried in anger. "You have disobeyed me. What is

there to stop me from throwing you into Tartarus, the fiery prison under the earth, where your brothers are? and from destroying the whole race of men?"

Prometheus answered quietly. "Lord Zeus, Iknow you will punish me cruelly for what I have done but no Immortal can take away a gift given by another Immortal. And you will not destroy man when I tell you that one day a mortal man will save you and all the gods on Olympus from the Giants."

This was true and Zeus knew he must not destroy man. But it made him want to punish Prometheus even more. He commanded his son Hephaestos, the lame blacksmith of the gods, to tie Prometheus up and chain him to a rock on the great mountain of Caucasus. Hephaestos was sorry to have to do this but he had to obey. He got his servants Might and Force to chain Prometheus to the great rock.

The summer sun burnt Prometheus and in winter he froze. But he had a valuable secret. He alone knew how to prevent the destruction of Zeus. When Zeus heard that Prometheus knew a secret that would save his life he decided to torture him. He sent an eagle to tear out Prometheus' liver. Every night his liver grew back again and every day the eagle came back to tear it out. Prometheus suffered dreadfully and his screams could be heard over the mountains but still he would not reveal his secret.

Meanwhile Zeus had thought of a punishment for mankind - he made the first woman. Hephaestos was ordered to shape her out of clay. His wife was the lovely Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, so he had a very good model. Zeus breathed life into her and each of the gods gave her a gift. Her name was Pandora which means "all gifted". Hermes the messenger of the gods brought her to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. Prometheus had warned his brother about accepting any gifts from Zeus, but when Epimetheus saw Pandora's beauty he forgot his brother's words. (In Greek Prometheus means 'forethought' or thinking before acting and Epimetheus means 'afterthought' or thinking only after one has acted.)

Pandora brought with her a strange dowry. Zeus had given her a box into which he had put every evil that could happen to man. Pandora had been told never to open this box but, like most humans, she was curious and wanted to see what was inside. As she opened the box all the evil inside it poured out and sickness, hatred, anger, lies and many other sorrows came upon man. Pandora was horrified and shut the lid quickly. But it was too late. It seemed as if man was doomed. Right from the bottom of the box however they heard a small voice calling to be let out. It was the voice of Hope. Perhaps Zeus had felt sorry for mankind and put Hope into the box. Perhaps he knew that in times of sorrow hope can be an added pain. After all, to go on hoping for relief is one way of dragging on the pain. The story of Pandora is one of many myths which say that the coming of woman brought trouble to the earth. Perhaps it was a good excuse to put all the blame on women.

At this time Zeus was in love with a beautiful nymph called Thetis. After he had freed him Prometheus told him that any child born to Thetis would be more powerful than his father. Zeus was quick to withdraw his favours and Thetis was given in marriage to a mortal named Peleus.

The story of Prometheus shows what an important discovery fire was to primitive man. It also shows that the Greek gods were thought of as being jealous of human beings gaining power and knowledge.

EROS AND PSYCHE

Eros (often called Cupid) was the god of Love. He was often quite playful and would shoot his arrows at young people. These arrows were not meant to kill anyone. They were special arrows. Anyone hit with one of Cupid's arrows immediately fell in love. They were dipped in a magic oil and were powerful indeed.

Psyche was the youngest daughter of a King. She had two lovely sisters who were both older than she was but she was the loveliest of them all. People looked at her amazed and her parents told each other that their youngest daughter would make a fine marriage.

But the gods and goddesses often became jealous of ordinary human beings. Psyche's beauty was so great the goddess of Beauty became envious. Aphrodite was the goddess of Beauty and she was also Cupid's mother. She looked down from Mount Olympus, the home of the gods, and she saw that there was someone more beautiful than herself.

She called Cupid to her. "Go to earth," she told him. "Shoot Psyche with one of your magic arrows but make sure she falls in love with the ugliest person in the world."

Cupid went into Psyche's room when she was asleep. He dipped his arrows in the magic oil and gently touched her with one of them. She awoke at the touch and he tried to rush away. In his haste the arrow cut his finger and he fell in love with Psyche himself.

Psyche remained unmarried. Her parents were angry and arranged marriage after marriage. She turned them all down. Her parents asked the god Apollo for advice. He told them that Psyche's future husband was waiting for her on top of a high mountain and they should take her there. So poor Psyche was taken up the mountain and left alone.

As she sat there sadly a gentle West Wind carried her to a wonderful house in a wood. Here she was looked after by unseen nymphs and each night her husband visited her after dark. She never saw him and she began to wonder if he was so ugly he was ashamed to show her his face.

"Can I not see your face?" she asked him.

"No," he replied. "You must never look upon my face for if you do I will have to leave you for ever."

Psyche's curiosity grew day by day. She could not bear it any longer. One night, as Cupid lay sleeping, she lit a lamp and gazed with wonder and delight at the beautiful face of Eros, the god of Love. She leant closer to take a better look and a drop of burning oil fell from her lamp onto his shoulder. Cupid jumped up and looked at Psyche in horror. "Why did you do this?" he cried. "You did not trust me and now I shall have to leave you." And he vanished.

Heartbroken, Psyche tried to follow him but she was not an immortal goddess and she could not go where he went. She wandered everywhere looking for him until, at last, she reached the temple of Demeter, goddess of plants. Demeter tried to help her. She told Psyche to go to Aphrodite and ask for mercy. So this is what Psyche did. She went to the goddess of Beauty and asked her to give Cupid back. The goddess was still angry, however. She was angry because she knew her son, Cupid, was still in love with this lovely girl.

"I will send him back to you," she said at last, "but you must do three things before you can have him." She set Psyche three tasks. The first one was to separate the different kinds of grain that were kept in the temple. Psyche could not do it, but Cupid knew what she was doing although he was not with her. He sent an army of ants to help her and the job was done.

Aphrodite was very angry. She gave Psyche her second task. This was to collect bits of golden fleece from some golden sheep which lived nearby. The sheep were very fierce and Psyche could not get near them. A kind river god advised her to collect the fleece that had got caught on thoms and bushes. She did this and took it back to Aphrodite who was angrier than before.

The final task she gave Psyche was to take a box to Persephone, queen of the Underworld. Psyche gave up all hope. How could she, an ordinary human being, go to the Underworld? Then again she

heard a voice telling her how to persuade Charon to ferry her across the river of the Dead. She was told not to eat anything when she was under ground. She gave Persephone the box and came back to Aphrodite for the third time.

Aphrodite kept her promise. She allowed Cupid to return to his wife. Zeus, the king of the gods, blessed their love and made Psyche immortal so that she could live for ever with the god of Love on Mount Olympus.



PLUTO AND PERSEPHONE

Pluto was the god of the Underworld. He was a strange, dark faced man and people were afraid of him. Nymphs and goddesses did not wish to marry him and live in the gloomy Underworld where nothing grew and where there were no flowers, trees, fields or sky. He was used to living alone but one day, when he was driving his dark chariot pulled by four black horses, he saw a lovely girl playing in an olive grove.

She was Persephone and she was the daughter of Demeter (or Ceres), goddess of plants. Persephone would never have agreed to marry him and live in a place where nothing grew and where she could not even hear the sound of the birds sing. Pluto did not wait to ask her. He just picked her up in his arms, put her in his chariot and kidnapped her, hoping no one had seen his deed.

At the very moment that Pluto was entering the Underworld, Persephone threw her belt into a nearby fountain, begging the water nymph to tell her mother where she was. The earth closed over her and Persephone was seen no more.

Demeter, her mother, looked everywhere for her daughter. No one knew where she had gone and Demeter began to neglect her work. As she wandered sadly over the earth calling for Persephone, the plants began to die, the grain did not grow, fruit did not ripen and the world began to look brown and dusty. At last Demeter came to the fountain into which Persephone had thrown her belt. The water nymph spoke to her.

"Demeter," she said. "I can tell you where your daughter is."

"Where?" Where?" cried Demeter overjoyed.

"As I ran through the Underworld," said the fountain, "I saw Persephone sitting next to the god Pluto. She is his queen and she dwells beside him in the Underworld."

Demeter thanked the friendly fountain and went angrily to Zeus. "Pluto has stolen my daughter," she wept. "Give her back to me, oh Zeus, or else the plants will all die."

Zeus could see that the world was suffering because Demeter could not work. He sent his messenger, Hermes, to tell Pluto to let Persephone go. He made one condition.

"Persephone should not have eaten anything while she was in the Underworld." he commanded.

But alas! The very day on which Hermes got to the Underworld was the first day on which Persephone had eaten six little pomegranate seeds. Pluto would not let her go. She was his wife and he loved her dearly. Persephone herself was not too unhappy in this nether world. Pluto was very kind to her and she was growing to love him.

But Demeter insisted that her daughter be returned to her, so Zeus compromised. "For each seed that Persephone has eaten," he decreed, "she must stay a month with Pluto. The rest of the time she may live upon Earth with her mother."

And so it came to pass that during the six months Persephone lived on earth everything grew green and healthy. Plants, fruit, trees, grass and grain all flourished. These months became the seasons of Spring and Summer. When Persephone returned to Pluto, Demeter stopped working and plants began to die. These months became the seasons of Autumn and Winter and the whole world mourned with Demeter.

THE STORY OF ORPHEUS

Whenever we think of Greek music we think of the name of Orpheus. He was the greatest musician of the ancient world.

Orpheus was the son of one of the nine muses, as the goddesses of the Arts were called. Orpheus' mother was Calliope, the goddess of Poetry. She taught him how to sing. Most importantly, she taught him to play the lyre so beautifully that even dangerous animals like lions and tigers would lie down peacefully next to each other and forget about fighting. He charmed everyone with his skill. No one ever forgot what it was like to hear Orpheus play his lyre.

One day Orpheus met a girl named Eurydice and he fell in love. They were to be married but on her wedding day Eurydice was bitten by a snake and she died. Orpheus went mad with grief. He would play nothing but sad songs. At last he went to Zeus, the king of the gods.

"Give me permission to go to the Underworld," he begged.

"Allow me to find Eurydice and bring her back to earth. I cannot live without her."

Zeus did not like this. He did not want mortals going down to the Underworld which was only for people who had died. He did not think that Pluto, the god of the Underworld, would like it either. But because of the beauty of the music Orpheus played, he agreed.

"Go then," he said, "but you will face many dangers."

Orpheus began his dangerous journey. He found the entrance to the Underworld and first of all he had to cross a deep, black river - the Styx. No living man had ever gone across. Only dead spirits had been taken over those fearful waters by Charon, the boatman. When Charon saw Orpheus he cried out.

"What are YOU doing here? No living man can cross the river of the Dead."

"Ferry me over," begged Orpheus and he sat down and played such a lovely melody that Charon could not refuse him.

Orpheus now got to the gates of the Underworld which was guarded by a fierce three headed dog called Cerberus. The dog snarled and leapt at Orpheus but again the young man played such sweet music Cerberus lay down quietly and let him pass.

Orpheus walked through the Underworld. He saw many terrible sights. People were being punished for all the porrible things they had done on earth. He looked upon them with pity but he could do nothing to help except play his beautiful music which gave them some relief from their sorrows. Finally he got to the great, dark throne room where Pluto and his queen Persephone sat.

"What ever are YOU doing here?" asked Pluto, shocked. "No living man has ever got this far."

"Oh great god," said Orpheus. "I have come to seek for my wife Eurydice. I cannot live without her. I beg you to allow her to return with me to earth."

"Certainly not," snapped Pluto. "You are asking the impossible. How can a dead woman return with you?"

"Then let me live here with her," said Orpheus and taking out his lyre he played a song of such pain and longing that both Pluto and Persephone remembered what it was like to be young and in love.

"Very well then," said Pluto. "Because of your lovely music I will allow Eurydice to return with you. But I must make one rule."

"Anything," said Orpheus eagerly. "I will agree to anything if Eurydice is returned to me."

"She may go with you, "said Pluto," but she will walk behind you. On no account must you turn back to see if she is there until you reach Earth itself. If you break this order and turn around she will return to the Underworld at once and will be lost to you for ever."

"I agree," laughed Orpheus, happy at last. He turned and went back the way he had come. The road was long and he could not hear anyone behind him. He stopped several times but went on singing in the darkness anyway. His music was happy, lilting and gay. They passed Cerberus. They got across the Styx river but as yet Orpheus heard no sound.

"Have I been tricked?" he wondered.

He could now see the light of Earth at the end of the long tunnel. He began to wonder if Eurydice was changed. Had she become pale and ill after being so long in the Underworld? He could bear it no longer. He turned.

There was a flash of light and the sound of thunder.

"Oh Orpheus," cried Eurydice despairingly. "Why did you look behind?"

"Eurydice!" screamed Orpheus madly, watching horrified as she began to slip backward into the shadows.

"Goodbye, goodbye," she whispered and he could see her no more.

Almost mad with sorrow Orpheus tried to follow her but he had had his chance and it was not given to him again. He had to return alone to the world above and as long as he lived he never saw Eurydice again. He wandered over the earth singing his beautiful songs until he died. And then, at last, he joined his lovely Eurydice in the Underworld.

PHAETON AND THE SUN-CHARIOT

Young men like to show off and Phaeton was no exception. He was the son of Apollo, god of the Sun. His mother was a nymph named Clymene and each morning, as the sun rose, she would point it out to her son and show him Apollo driving it across the sky from east to west.

"There is your father," she would tell him, and his heart swelled with pride. Unfortunately Phaeton liked to boast.

"My father is the Sun God," he would tell his friends and they soon became jealous of him. They laughed at him.

"How can you prove this?" they asked the young boy. "You can say anything but no one really knows if what you say is the truth."

Phaeton went back to his mother and told her he was determined to visit his father. He wanted to ask the great Apollo to show his friends that he really was the son of a god.

Clymene showed Phaeton how to travel to his father's home in the sky and he set off eastwards. He wanted to catch his father before he set off on his daily rounds in the chariot of the Sun. Finally he arrived and Apollo was pleased to see his young son. He welcomed him and asked him what he could do for him.

"Father," said Phaeton eagerly, "My friends do not believe that you are my father, They think that I only boast about the great Apollo being my father. Please help me to convince them."

Apollo smiled. He did not realise his son was serious about this. At last Phaeton managed to convince him that he needed help. Apollo promised that he would do anything he could to help his son show his friends that he was the son of a god.

Phaeton then asked his father to allow him to drive the Sun-Chariot across the sky. Apollo was shocked.

"No one can drive this chariot except myself," he told the angry boy.

"Please, please father," the boy begged. "When my friends see me in the chariot they will know I am your son."

Apollo was not pleased. "My horses are fiery steeds," he said. "They are too wild for you to control. You will not be able to keep them in the correct path."

Phaeton would not listen. He was proud and arrogant. "Of course I can keep the horses in line," he told his father. "I am clever with horses."

Very reluctantly Apollo agreed to let this daring young boy handle his chariot. He warned him that he must never whip the horses. He told him not to get too close to the earth for the chariot would burn the ground. Phaeton listened carelessly. He was in a great hurry to get into the chariot and begin his journey from east to west.

At first he was cautious. He drove carefully. He did not use the whip. But soon he became overconfident. He drove so fast he lost the way. In his excitement be galloped too near to earth and all the plants began to burn. Phaeton grew so frightened at this that he drove his horses as far away from earth as he could.

The land became too cold and there were storms of snow everywhere. The people of the world cried out to Zeus, king of the gods, for help. Zeus was sleeping but the people's desperate cries awoke him. He looked around and saw a strange young man inside the Sun-Chariot. He was furious. He threw a thunderbolt at the silly young man, killing him at once.

Apollo brought his horses under control but Phaeton fell into the sea and died. He had proved he was the son of Apollo but he lost his life in doing so.

ATLANTA AND THE GOLDEN APPLES

Praying to the Gods to help you win the girl you love is something that has been done right through the ages. Here is a story of how a young man was helped by the goddess Aphrodite, the goddess of love herself. Now Aphrodite was sympathetic to lovers - specially when it seemed that there was no hope of such love succeeding.

In Greece there lived the Princess Atlanta who was famous throughout the country for her skill as a huntress and as a runner. She had vowed never to marry a man who could not beat her at a race and although many men tried no one had been able to outrun her. Atlanta wanted to make sure that the men who tried to run against her really loved her. If they lost they were put to death so it was only a man willing to die for his love that was willing to compete with her.

Atlanta won race after race and people began to think she was unbeatable, until one day a young man named Melanion watched her run. He fell madly in love with the fast running princess but knew he could not win against her. He prayed to the goddess Aphrodite who heard his prayer and decided to help the desperate young man.

"Here are three golden apples from the garden of the gods," she told him. "Carry them in the race and whenever Atlanta is about to overtake you, drop one of them in her path."

Melanion was a very good looking youth and the crowd hoped he would win. They were getting tired of seeing so many handsome young men lose their lives simply because of Atlanta's pride in herself. They cheered him loudly. The race began. Atlanta knew she would win so she allowed Melanion to take the lead at the beginning. He raced ahead for a short time but soon he could hear Atlanta's fleet footsteps behind him. Taking one of the apples in his hand he threw it in Atlanta's path.

Seeing the golden ball go rolling under her feet, Atlanta's curiosity got the better of her. She stopped and picked it up. Melanion shot forward. But soon he heard Atlanta close behind him again. Taking

the second apple he threw it almost under Atlanta's feet. She stopped once more and picked it up. Melanion ran on.

But he was getting tired and sooner than he expected he heard Atlanta close behind him.

"Help me, Aphrodite," he prayed and threw the last golden apple to the side of the path. Atlanta would have to turn in order to pick it up. She hesitated, but so sure was she of her speed that she felt she still had time to overtake Melanion. She stopped for the third time, giving her competitor the extra minute he needed to reach the winning post. Making a frantic effort he passed the post a few seconds ahead of the fleet huntress. Atlanta was beaten. The crowd cheered happily and Atlanta kept her side of the bargain. Melanion had won the lovely runner for his bride.

No one knows whether she felt angry that he had cheated to win. Probably they lived happily ever after.



ICARUS

The desire to fly has always been a wish of men. Many tried it and according to legend some succeeded. In Sri Lanka, the great King Ravana was said to be able to fly through the skies. In Greece there lived Daedalus - a clever and inventive man who was able to make many things with his skillful hands.

Deadalus had a son called Icarus and a nephew called Talus. He taught both these young men everything he knew. But alas! Talus soon began to be better than his uncle and Daedalus grew extremely jealous. Unable to control himself he leapt at Talus one day and threw him out of the window. Talus died and, in fear, Daedalus ran away to Crete. He took his son, Icarus, with him.

The king of Crete was happy to have a man like Daedalus in his kingdom. He gave him a great deal of work to do. Daudalus invented many new things for workers to use to make their work easier. For instance he invented a new kind of saw for cutting wood.

The main thing that Daedalus built was an enormous stone prison. It had so many passages and corridors that no one could find his way out of it once he was inside. It was called the Labyrinth. The king of Crete imprisoned a terribly evil creature in here called the Minotaur.

But Daedalus was not an easy man to work with. Soon he quarrelled with the king himself. In anger, the king locked him up in the very same stone prison he had built, along with his son, Icarus. Even though Daedalus had built this prison he could not find his way out of it.

The two men became tired of living in this way. Daedalus knew that the only way they could escape was by air. They would have to fly out of the terrible place. So he made hintself a pair of wings with feathers that he had collected for many days from the birds who flew overhead. He stuck them together and then fixed them onto his shoulders with wax.

Carefully he flapped his wings and lifted himself into the air. The wings held. He could fly. He practised a little and returned to Icarus.

"We can both leave here soon," he told his son who was delighted to think he would soon be freed from the gloomy prison. In a few days, Daedalus had made a second pair of wings like the first one. It was now time to make their escape.

At dawn the next day he carefully fixed the wings on Icarus with wax. He then fixed his own.

"Now remember," he told his excited son, "don't fly anywhere near the sun. The wax will melt and your wings will fall off. Stay close to the surface of the sea until we reach land away from the island of Crete."

Icarus was not really listening too closely. He forgot what his father told him. He was so happy to be free at last that he flew higher and higher and higher into the sky. The day grew hotter and hotter and soon the wax on Icarus' wings began to melt. The wings fell off and Icarus fell like a stone into the sea and was drowned.

Daedalus turned back in search of him but all he found were the wings floating on the waters of the Aegean Sea. His grief was terrible but some would say that he deserved his punishment since he had been guilty of murdering his own nephew many years before.

THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR

Theseus was a clever man. He was the son of the King of Athens and he was famous for his bravery, and his strength also.

Far across the sea from Athens was the island of Crete. This was the island where King Minos lived and it was on this island that Daedalus, the father of foolish Icarus, build the great stone prison for the Minotaur. The Minotaur was a terrible creature which lived in the winding passages of this prison. No one could find his way out of the place once he was inside.

For some reason King Minos kept the Minotaur a prisoner without having him killed. Each year seven boys and seven girls were sent from Athens to be fed to the dreadful beast. The people of Athens were heartbroken at losing so many lovely young people each year.

On this particular day Theseus was with his father when the awful request came from King Minos.

"Send me along with the fourteen young people," he begged. His father was aghast.

"How can I send you, my only son?" he asked.

"I will come back to you, father," said Theseus. "I will kill the Minotaur and save the young people for the future."

Seeing he was determined to go the king of Athens sadly agreed. He made one condition. "Your sails are black at the moment." he said. "If you kill the Minotaur and are successful, change the sails of your ship to white so that I will see them from my palace and know you are safe. If you do not succeed, let them remain black."

Theseus agreed and ran off to make the arrangements. He and his friends set sail for Crete and were taken to King Minos as soon as they landed. He wanted to make sure that fourteen boys and girls had actually been sent.

King Minos had a beautiful daughter named Ariadne. As soon as she saw the handsome Theseus she fell in love with him. "I must help him," she thought to herself. So she went to Theseus and gave him a huge ball of string.

"Hold this ball in your hand," she said. "I will hold one end of the string and, as you go into the Labyrinth of passages, let the string unwind. You will be able to find your way out of there safely and come back to me."

Theseus was overjoyed by this solution and promised to marry her and take her back with him to Athens.

He followed Ariadne's instructions carefully. She held one end of the string and he kept unwinding the ball as he went along those long passages looking for the terrible Minotaur. When he heard a loud and frightening roar in the prison, he knew he had reached the monster.

After a long and bloody battle Theseus killed the Minotaur and returned along the Labyrinth's passages safely. King Minos was furious when he heard that Theseus had killed his Minotaur. Theseus did not wait for the king of Crete to punish him. Forgetting his promise to Ariadne he left her behind and set sail for home along with the boys and girls who had accompanied him.

But Theseus was not a thoughtful man. He forgot his father's instructions about changing the colour of his sails. When the old man looked out of his window he saw Theseus' ship returning with the sails all black. He was overcome with grief. He threw himself off the hill into the sea and died.

Only then did Theseus realise the extent of his thoughtless behaviour. He became king of Athens and ruled wisely and well for many years but we cannot forget that he behaved very badly to Ariadne and was responsible for his father's death.

ECHO AND NARCISSUS

The girls who served the greek gods and goddesses were called nymphs. They were very beautiful and often lived in rivers, fields and woods. One of these nymphs was called Echo and she was the servant of Hera (also called Juno) who was the wife of Zeus.

Echo was a sweet girl - but like many young girls she talked too much and annoyed her mistress. Hera soon became tired of all her chatter and punished the young nymph.

"Hereafter," she said, "You will be unable to say any words other than the last words of whatever another person says. You can only speak if someone speaks to you. You cannot begin a conversation on your own."

This was a terrible punishment for the young nymph who liked to talk. She was so ashamed that she ran away to the forest and hid. It was when she was thus hiding that she saw the beautiful youth, Narcissus.

Narcissus was the son of a river god and he often came to the forest to hunt. Echo fell in love with him as soon as she saw him but she could not speak to him until he spoke to her. So she just followed him around, hoping he would notice her. One day he did. He heard her moving behind him and he called, "Who's here?"

"Here." said Echo.

"Here I am. Come," called Narcissus.

"I am come," answered Echo and ran out to meet him.

But Narcissus was a proud boy and when he saw that Echo was just a wood nymph he turned away scornfully and took no further notice of her. She was heart broken and followed him everywhere. He ignored her completely. The poor nymph grew thinner and thinner. At last she disappeared altogether until there was nothing left of her but her voice.

Echo's friends were extremely angry with Narcissus for his cruelty to their friend. They went to the goddess Aphrodite and asked her to punish the conceited young man. Aphrodite agreed. She



realised that Narcissus loved no one but himself. She watched him before planning a punishment for him, and then she came to a decision.

One day Narcissus went out hunting as usual. Feeling thirsty he knelt beside a pool to drink some cool water. The pool was clear and green and Narcissus saw his own reflection for the first time. Never before had he seen his own face. He did not realise that the lovely picture he was looking at in the water was himself and he felt he would never be able to look away.

"Who are you?" he cried to his reflection. He thought he was looking at a nymph of the pool. There was no answer. He put his hand into the water to touch her but the pool broke into ripples and the face too vanished for a little while. And then it came back, and held Narcissus spellbound once more.

He could not move from the pool. "Talk to me. Be with me," he would beg.

But all he heard in reply was the voice of Echo, which still stayed near him. "Me, me," it would sigh in reply.

Up on Mount Olympus, the home of the gods, Aphrodite smiled in satisfaction. "Proud Narcissus," she said to herself. "Now you know what it is like to feel a love that can never be returned."

She waited a little while. Narcissus sat mourning by the pool day after day.

At last Aphrodite took pity on him. She changed him into a lovely white flower that is today called the narcissus. It grows beside pools and always seems to be bending towards the water, looking at its own reflection.

As for Echo, she remained just a voice that repeated what anyone said. If you stand in a large empty space and call out you will hear the sound of your own voice returning to you. This sound is called an 'echo', in memory of the sad and heartbroken nymph who loved Narcissus.

PERSEUS

This is a long story in four parts, which proves that whatever is written in the stars must come to pass.

Danae

The king of Argos, Acrisius, had a beautiful daughter named Danae. A soothsayer told the king that his grandson would kill him one day. Now Acrisius had only this one daughter and so he wanted to make sure she would never have a child. He locked her up in a high tower so that no one could get to her.

But Zeus, the king of the gods, got into her window by changing himself into a golden shower, and he visited her many times. Danae had a son whom she named Perseus.

King Acrisius was filled with fear. He could not keep his grandson in his kingdom. He locked Danae and Perseus up in a box and threw them into the sea. Fortunately, the box floated across the sea and the two of them survived. They got to a land where King Polydectes ruled. He took Danae and Perseus to his court and soon fell in love with the beautiful, but unlucky princess. For various reasons she refused to marry him.

Perseus grew up to be strong and handsome. He would not allow his mother to be forced to marry Polydectes. The King realised he must get rid of Perseus. He sent him on an adventure hoping the young man would never return. He told Perseus of the Gorgons. They were terrible creatures. They were sisters who had snakes on their heads instead of hair. The wickedest sister was Medusa. She had such terrible eyes she turned anyone at whom she looked to stone. Polydectes told Perseus to bring him the head of Medusa.

Medusa

The only people who knew where the Gorgons were to be found were the Grey Sisters. These old women had only one eye among them and by a trick Perseus got hold of that eye. He refused to give it back unless they helped him. They did so.

He now prayed to the gods for help. This is how they helped him. Pluto gave him a helmet which would make him invisible. Hermes, the gods' messenger, gave him his winged shoes so that he could fly and Athene, the goddess of Wisdom, gave him her bright shield so that he could see Medusa's face in it and not look at her face directly.

Perseus was a clever young man. He arrived when the Gorgons were asleep. Holding the shield so that he could see Medusa's reflection, he cut off her head and put it in a bag. Even though she was dead her eyes could still turn a man to stone.

Using his winged shoes Perseus flew into the air and at last came to the country of Ethiopia. Here he had another exciting encounter.

Andromoda

King Cephus and Queen Cassiopeia of Ethiopia had a terrible problem. Cassiopeia had been foolish. She had boasted that she was more beautiful than the sea nymphs. This made Poseidon, the god of the Sea, very angry. He sent a terrible sea-dragon to Ethiopia. It was a murderous creature and ate up many people.

A wise man told the king only one thing could save them.

"What is that?" asked the King.

"You must give your daughter, Andromeda, to the sea dragon," the sage replied.

"Never," said Cassiopeia but the people begged that it be done.

"We will all die otherwise," they cried.

At last the king and queen agreed. Andromeda was taken to a rock near the sea and tied to it. Then all the people stood back and waited for the monster to come. Out of the sea came the dreadful creature. It went straight to the poor princess, who was crying bitterly in fear.

At that moment Perseus happened to be flying over Ethiopia. He saw the rock where Andromeda lay in chains. He flew down to her. "What is wrong?" he asked gently. "Tell me why you are chained."

Andromeda screamed, "Look behind you."

Perseus turned to find the dragon almost on him. Quickly he took out the Medusa head and turned the face towards the sea dragon. All at once there was no noise. The loud roars of the creature stopped instantly as it was turned to stone and disappeared under the waves.

There was tremendous happiness in the country. Andromeda was given in marriage to Perseus who now decided to go home to his mother.

Acrisius

Perseus flew home to find his mother was very unhappy. Polydectes had been trying to force her into marriage. Perseus knew the time had come to punish the wicked king. He appeared before him. Polydectes was not pleased to see the young man he had sent away to die.

"Well Perseus," he said. "Have you brought me the Gorgon's head?"

Without speaking Perseus put his hand in the bag and took out the terrible head. Polydectes screamed and was turned to stone by those piercing eyes.

Perseus now felt it was time for him to go back to his grandfather. He did not know what the wise man had said about him killing his grandfather. Danae hoped that she would be forgiven. They set off-Perseus, Andromeda and Danae.

When King Acrisius heard his grandson was coming he got so frightened he ran away to Larissa. The King of Larissa was holding a competition and just at that time Perseus was passing through the city. He decided to take part in the Games.

One of the competitions was called quoits. Heavy iron rings were thrown as far as possible. The person who threw one furthest was declared the victor. Perseus picked up the rings. By accident one of the quoits slipped from his hand and killed one of the spectators.

Can you guess who this spectator was? It was King Acrisius who had come to Larissa to escape his grandson.

The words of the soothsayer had come true. Perseus was now king of Argos but he was not happy about becoming king in this way so he changed his kingdom for another and ruled happily there with Andromeda and his mother.

THE STORY OF ADONIS

Adonis was the most handsome man the world has ever seen. In fact, if we want to say that some one is extremely good looking we might say, "He is an Adonis". There are many versions of this tale of Adonis but here is the one that is most widely accepted.

There lived in Assyria a foolish king who once boasted that his daughter was more beautiful than the goddess Aphrodite herself. Now, Aphrodite was the goddess of Love and Beauty, and she was not happy to hear such silly talk. To punish the king she made his daughter fall in love with him.

This sad situation became very complicated. The daughter, whose name was Myrrha, asked her maid servant to trick her father and bring him to her bed at night. This happened without her father knowing who she was. She became pregnant.

When the king realised what had happened he tried to kill his daughter. Aphrodite rescued her and turned her into a tree which is called "myrrh" to this very day. The little baby grew inside the tree and in the spring the trunk split. Inside was the most beautiful baby in the world. He was so beautiful that Aphrodite took the child and planned to make him her lover as soon as he was old enough.

But she did not want anyone to see him till then. She hid Adonis in a oox and sent the box to Persephone, queen of the Underworld. She wanted him kept where no one but the Dead would see him.

Unfortunately, Persephone opened the box and fell under the spell of this lovely child. She refused to give him back. Furious, Aphrodite went to Zeus, king of the gods. He handed the case over to Calliope, a Muse, who said that Adonis should spend four months with Persephone, four months with Aphrodite and four months with any one he liked.

Aphrodite did not play fair. She charmed Adonis with a girdle or belt of love. He stayed with her and Persephone was so angry she decided on revenge. Now the god Ares, the great god of War, was angry with Aphrodite because she had ended their love affair. He changed himself into a boar at Persephone's instigation. One day Adonis went hunting. By now he had grown up and had had three children by Aphrodite.

During the hunt, Ares managed to wound him in the thigh. Adonis died. Wherever drops of his blood fell little flowers called wood anemones sprang up.

Modem scholars think of Adonis as a Spirit of Vegetation of those times. People thought he represented nature and they would grow "Adonis Gardens." These were small pots of seeds which grew fast and then died equally fast. Christians in the island of Cyprus still practise this custom.

TEREUS AND PHILOMENA

This story is a tale of a deceitful and lying king. Tercus was the king of Thrace. He came to Athens to help Pandion, king of Athens, in a quarrel he had with a neighbour. The Athenian king was so grateful he gave Tereus his daughter, Procne, to marry.

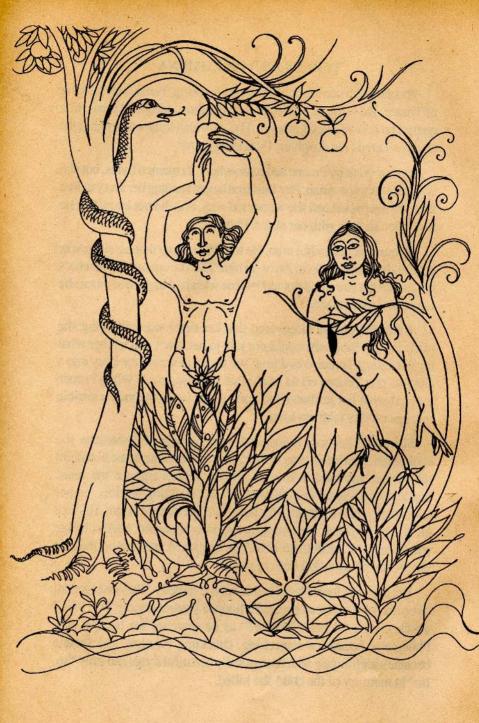
As time went by Procne had a son whom she named Itylus, but she was not a happy woman. Her husband began sending her away to live far from the palace and she wondered why. She did not know that he had fallen in love with her sister, Philomena.

Tereus was a dreadful man. He told Philomena that her sister was dead and persuaded her to live with him. Then he cut out Philomena's tongue so that she could not tell Procne what had happened when she returned to the palace.

When Philomena discovered that her sister was still living she made a plan. Since she could not talk to her sister and tell her what terrible things Tereus was doing, she began to weave the story into a cloth so that Procne could read what had happened. When Procne realised what her husband had done to her sister she took a terrible revenge on this faithless king.

She killed her son, Itylus, and with the help of Philomena she cooked his flesh into a tasty dish. When Tereus came home that night she served this food to him as a feast. Tereus enjoyed the feast. Suddenly he looked up. Philomena was chuckling horribly. In her hands she carried the head of his baby son. She threw it at him. His face grew red with shock, He sprang up and drew his sword, mad with rage and sorrow. "I'll kill them both," he screamed and chased the two sisters, intending to kill both of them.

But the gods took a hand in this savage tragedy. They changed all three into birds. Tereus became a hoopoe forever crying "Pou Pou," which means "Where? Where?" as he searches for his lost son. Philomena became a screeching, chuckling swallow and Procne became a nightingale which sings sadly beautiful songs and calls "Itu, Itu" in memory of the child she killed.



ADAM AND EVE

A very different sort of myth from the Greek ones are those we the Christian faith too. Christianity, like Judaism, is monotheistic, which means it has only one god. The describes the creation of the world is different therefore from the Greek version, because here only one all-powerful god is responsible. Also man was deliberately created as the main point of interest in the

world, in the Hebrew or Jewish version. This is how that story goes.

After God created the world he planted a beautiful garden in the east. It was called the Land of Eden and in it were trees bearing the most delicious fruit. God put Adam (which is the Hebrew name for man) into the garden. "You can eat any fruit that is in the garden," he told him, "but you must never eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." Adam listened carefully and made up his mind never to touch the fruit of that tree. He knew that if he ate the fruit he would become just an ordinary mortal and he would die.

As time went on Adam become lonely. God decided he needed a companion and one night, when Adam was asleep, he took one of his ribs and changed it into a woman. Adam called the woman Eve. It is a word which also means 'Life'. They were happy together for a long time.

In this garden lived a serpent and none was more cunning than this serpent. The serpent asked Eve, "Why do you not eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge?"

"If we do we shall die." said Eve.

Now the serpent was really Satan (the Devil) in disguise. He kept on trying to persuade Eve to eat the fruit. "Of course you will not die," he hissed. "You will only know about Good and Evil like God does."

Eve was like all women. She was very curious. She tried to fight temptation but she could not. The fruit looked so very tasty. She picked one and bit into it. She gave it to Adam who ate some too.

At once everything looked different to them. They looked at their naked bodies and felt shy. They ran to wear some leaves. When God called them they hid from him.

"Where are you?" God called to Adam.

"I am here," said Adam. "I ran to hide because I was naked."

God grew stem and angry. "Who told you you were naked?" he asked. "You did not bother about this earlier. You have eaten the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil." Adam was frightened and blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. God punished all three of them. This was his punishment.

To the serpent he said. "You will live all your life as the lowest of low creatures. You will crawl on the ground. You will be the enemy of men. Everybody will hate you and run away when you are near."

To Eve he said," You will have children and I will make childbearing painful for you. Man will be your master."

To Adam he said, "You will suffer the rest of your life for this sin. The ground will be cursed and you will sweat and toil to make a living from it. You will have to grow your own food. This lovely garden will no longer give you all the food you need. In the end you will die and become dust."

He drove them all away from the Garden of Eden. He made clothes for them out of animal skins. Adam and Eve tried to go back to the garden but God sent an angel with a flaming sword to prevent them from going in.

Eventually Eve had two sons. One was called Abel and one was called Cain. They lived their lives in sorrow. In fact, Cain killed Abel and made God even more angry. But Eve had other children and from them is the human race descended.

THE STORY OF NOAH

As time went on the world become populated. Thousands of people were now living in it and they were leading very sinful lives. God was angry and he was sorry he had made the human race. He decided to wipe them off the face of the earth. He was going to send a great flood to destroy all men.

But there was just one good man on earth. His name was Noah and he tried to live by the laws God had laid down. God decided to save him and his family. He spoke to Noah. "Build a ship out of gopher wood," he told him. "Make three decks. Put in windows and doors and divide the boat into compartments." Noah listened carefully and began to make the ship, which took nearly 100 years to build. People in those days lived a long, long time.

When the huge boat, or Ark, was ready God told Noah to take a male and female of every living creature and put them on his Ark. The people round about must have laughed at Noah for doing something that seemed so foolish, but Noah carried out his work without listening to them.

Seven days before the rains came God told Noah to go into the Ark with all the animals. The rains began. Never had there been rains like this. It was as if a waterfall was pouring out of the sky. The waters of the ocean rose. All the land was covered. But Noah and his family were safe inside the Ark although it rained for 150 days. Everything and everybody else was drowned.

At last Noah sent out birds from the window. A dove returned carrying an olive leaf in its beak. Then Noah knew dry land must be near. He felt the Ark touch land. He waited for a week before doing anything and at last God told him he could come out of the Ark.

The Ark had come to rest on Mount Ararat in the land of Armenia. Noah led his family out of the boat. All the animals came out too. They found new homes and began to multiply. God made peace with the people he had saved. He decided never to destroy them again even though they were sometimes wicked. After the rains he often puts a

rainbow in the sky to remind himself and us of the agreement he has made with man.

Noah lived on happily and died in the land of Ur.

The story of Noah is thought to be a myth but there is a similar Greek myth about a man called Deucalion, and some strange facts have come to light. Archaeologists have discovered that there WAS a flood that covered much of the earth during the time Noah must have lived. So we see that there is often a little bit of truth in what we think may be just myths.

HINDU GODS

Hinduism has many gods, unlike Christianity or Islam which have only one each. The three gods in Hinduism are different from those in Greek mythology too, in that each of them is an extremely powerful person. Brahma is known as the Creator, Shiva the Destroyer and Vishnu the Preserver. However, each one contains the qualities of the others as well. It is sometimes said they are three different aspects of the same god. Each individual may pay special attention to any one of these gods. At present Shaivism or worship of Shiva is more popular in South India and Sri Lanka while Vishnu is more celebrated in North India.

Each of these gods has his consort, Sarasvati the goddess of Wisdom for Brahma, Lakshmi the goddess of Prosperity for Vishnu, and Uma for Shiva. Uma is also known as Parvati or Durga, and has a very varied nature. It should be noted that these goddesses are in a sense not separate individuals, but are live forms of the forces or energy of their husbands.

Of the three gods Vishnu is the most human, in that he is supposed to have been born into the world on several occasions, mainly in order to prevent some disaster. His most celebrated incarnations as a man are as Rama (hero of the Ramayana), Krishna (philosopher and guide to the heroes of the Mahabharata) and also the Buddha.

In addition to these powerful deities Hinduism also has a range of lesser gods, similar to the Greek ones. The most famous of these are Indra, god of rain, who occupies a position similar to that of Zeus (or the Roman Jupiter), Suriya, god of the sun, and Vayu, the wind god. These gods are more closely associated with the elements than the Greek gods. The more human characters and qualities of the Greek gods are concentrated in the three main Hindu gods. It is thought that these were later deities who took over from the simpler gods of the elements who were worshipped first.

Hindu mythology often ties these different types of gods together with men, as can be seen from the following myths.

THE BIRTH OF RAMA

Heaven was a hopeless ruin. Indra stood looking on in anger. He had fought the Demon King Ravana, lost, been captured and released. His eyes filled with tears as he looked at the ruin. He stood before Brahma in anger. "It's all your fault, all of it," he said.

"It is my loss that I created any of you," Brahma said in despair.

"Ravana has killed my people. His son Indrajit captured me, and for some unknown reason let me go."

"I'm the one who arranged that," replied Brahma.

Indra was not appeased. "You also arranged it so that no one in heaven can kill Ravana. You've set him over us all."

Brahma did not know what to say. He ordered Viswakarman, the architect of heaven, to rebuild it. Indra continued to storm.

"Indra, be silent," Brahma cried. "It is true I do not know all the answers and I can never lie. But Ravana has been careless. Go to Narayana and ask him how."

Indra went to Narayana, the Lord Vishnu, and asked him how they were to bring down Ravana.

"Give me your permission to attack him in Lanka again," he asked.

"Never," said Narayana. "Brahma has promised that no creature of heaven or of the underworld can kill Ravana. Yet I will cause his death."

"Ah," said Indra. "So this is how Ravana has been careless. Because of his great pride he thought it unnecessary to mention animals or men when he made this request of Brahma. He eats men - they are his food - so why should he fear them? We need you again, Lord Narayana. For the good of all the worlds, accept birth as aman."

"I already have," the god replied quietly.

And this is how the god became King Dasa-ratha's four sons and how Rama, who was to cause the death of Ravana, was born.

THE BIRTH OF HANUMAN

The story of the birth of Hanuman was told in this manner to Rama:-

Once Lord Brahma came down to the world and rested on Mount Meru. Here he shed a tear and where it touched the ground the first monkey was born. Brahma named him Riksharaja.

Riksharaja played all day in the garden of Meru. One morning he saw his own reflection in a lake. Thinking it was the face of his enemy he jumped in. When he came out of the water he was a female. In fact, he had turned into a monkey girl so beautiful that both Indra and Suriya the sun fell in love with her. They both made love to her and she had two golden coloured babies. When she washed them in the lake they splashed water all over her and Riksharaja found that he was once again a male.

The two children were named Vali and Sujiva. Vali seemed to get everything for himself so Riksharaja asked Vayu to create a faithful friend for Sujiva. Vayu made love to the beautiful Anjana and Hanuman was born. He was a little monkey with white fur, a red face and brownish-yellow eyes. Anjana was already married to another monkey so she had to leave Hanumman all alone, by the mouth of a small cave.

Baby Hanuman was hungry. Like all monkeys he liked fruit and when he saw the sun he thought it was a big ripe mango fruit and leaped at it. Surya smiled at him and he moved unhurt inside the sun's fire. This was the moment when Asuru Rahu swallowed the sun alive in his black mouth, causing a solar eclipse. While Hanuman was struggling to get out of the flames his foot went into Rahu's eye. Rahu complained to Indra, "Another Rahu is eating the sun."

"More trouble," sighed Indra and got on his great white elephant Airvata and set out to take a look. Rahu led the way. This time Hanuman was able to get a good look at him. His round head looked an even bigger fruit than the Sun. Hanuman jumped at him and bit his ear. Indra cried "Stop that."

Hanuman turned and saw Airvata, the biggest fruit of all. He came at Airvata waving his arms and swinging his legs, completely out of control. Airvata stepped aside to avoid him and Indra pushed him away with his thunderbolt.

Hanuman fell back to earth. He broke his jaw falling on a stone by the mouth of his cave. Vayu saw this and was angry. He took his son inside the little cave and held him.

Then the wind hid himself from the world in anger and the bodies of all living things became hard as wood and their joints stiffened into knots. The ever-moving air moved no more and lay still.

Lord Brahma realised he had to do something. He came to Vayu's cave and healed Hanuman's jaw. Brahma promised Vayu that Hanuman would live as long as he himself wished to and that he could not be killed.

Vayu was still not completely placated or happy. Then Surya came and set three mangoes beside the sleeping Hanuman. That pleased the wind. He came out and the worlds could breathe again.

Vayu took Hanuman to Lord Shiva who taught him to change his form to anything he pleased. Nandin the bull taught him languages. He learned poetry too. As his knowledge grew he realised he had been wearing golden ear-rings all his life without knowing it. Nandin told him that no one else could see those ear-rings except a yet unknown person who would meet him and become his trusted friend and his master. It is not difficult to guess who this person is.

PART II - EPICS THE FALL OF TROY

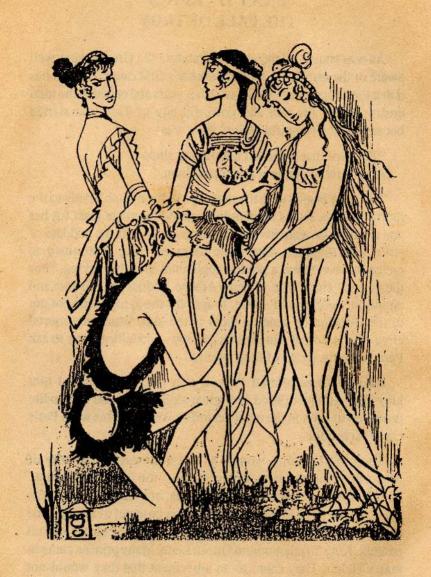
As was shown by the story of Pandora the Greeks were well aware of the trouble a beautiful woman could cause. Legend has it that the Trojan War which lasted ten years and ended in the total destruction of the rich and powerful city of Troy was started because of the beautiful Helen. Hers was -

"The face that launched a thousand ships And burnt the topless towers of Ilium."

The story begins with the marriage of the nymph Thetis to the mortal Peleus. Zeus commanded a grand marriage feast for her and all the gods were invited. Unfortunately, Eris the goddess of strife was forgotten. She came uninvited and, determined to create trouble, threw a golden apple onto the table saying, "For the fairest." Hera, wife of Zeus, Athene, goddess of Wisdom and Aphrodite, goddess of Love, fought for the apple. Zeus got out of the situation by sending them to the most handsome mortal alive - Paris, son of King Priam of Troy - and telling them to ask Paris to be the judge of their beauty.

Each goddess offered Paris a rich gift. Hera offered him kingship, Athene offered him great skill in war and Aphrodite promised to get him the most beautiful woman for his wife. Paris chose Aphrodite.

The most beautiful woman at that time was Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. Helen's history too is very interesting. Zeus fell in love with her mother Leda, and came to her in the guise of a swan. It is said that Helen was born out of an egg. She had a sister Clytemnestra who was the daughter of her mortal parents, King Tyndareus and Queen Leda. Many princes came to marry Helen. They came to an agreement that they would not fight among themselves but would honour Helen's choice. They also agreed that should anything happen to Helen they would unite in saving her. No one knows why Helen chose Menelaus. He was not the best looking or the strongest or the richest.



Menelaus' elder brother Agamemnon married Helen's sister Clytemnestra. But Agamemnon had earlier been one of Helen's suitors. We can imagine what Clytemnestra felt, knowing she was only his second choice.

Agamemnon had inherited an uneasy throne. He was the son of King Atreus whose brother Thyestes had had a secret affair with his wife. When he got to know about it Atreus was determined to punish his brother. He thought of a horrible way of doing this. He killed Thyestes' two young sons and served their flesh to Thyestes during a meal. Atreus knew that if Thyestes ate the flesh of his own children he would be despised by the citizens of Argos forever. As Thyestes ate his children's flesh he sensed that there was something very wrong. When he realised his brother's terrible revenge he rose from his seat, upsetting the whole table of food, and cursing the whole family he went into exile. Thyestes had lost his elder children but his youngest son Aegisthus, who was just a baby, was still with him. He took the baby into exile with him and taught him to hate Atreus and his sons.

Atreus had committed a terrible sin by killing his little nephews. To the Greeks there were three sins which were not forgiven by the gods. One was the shedding of kindred blood, that is, killing a blood-relation; the other was misusing the hospitality of a person whose guest you were; the third was blasphemy. Atreus had shed kindred blood and for it his whole family had been cursed by his brother.

Atreus died but the terrible curse fell on his son Agamemnon when he became king. The gods would not be satisfied until Thyestes was avenged.

Meanwhile Paris, who had been promised the most beautiful woman by Aphrodite, was sent to Sparta as an ambassador of Troy by his father. Of course Paris fell in love with Helen and persuaded her to go with him to Troy. This was a very bad thing to do because not only was he taking another man's wife, he was also violating the laws of hospitality.

Menelaus then appealed to his elder brother and to all Helen's suitors who had agreed to protect her, to help him to fight Paris and bring Helen back. Agamemnon, king of Argos, was the leader of the Greek army. Brave warriors like Achilles (the son of Peleus and Thetis), Odysseus and Menelaus gathered their armies together and sailed with him to Troy to win glory for themselves by fighting and to bring Helen back.

Just as they were about to set sail they met with a serious problem. There was no wind to carry their ships out to sea. Their prophet, Calchas, told them that a virgin princess must be sacrificed for the winds to be fair. Agamemnon as leader could not ask any other king to make this sacrifice. Iphegenia was Agamemnon's eldest daughter. She was very beautiful and he loved her dearly. But Agamemnon was a proud king and he did not want to ask his army to turn back and so he sacrificed his daughter. He would not be a hero in the eyes of his people unless he conquered Troy and took all its treasure back to Argos. (Although the main reason for the Trojan war was Helen the Greeks also knew that Troy was a rich eastern city. Many who fought with Agamemnon fought in the hope of getting some of this treasure. Others came with Agamemnon because they were afraid to refuse such a powerful king).

The Greeks and the Trojans fought for ten years. Both sides lost many of their greatest warriors. There didn't seem to be a way of ending the war. There are many stories of their great battles during this time. The most famous book about the Trojan War is Homer's 'Iliad'

At last the cunning Odysseus thought of a clever plan. He made the Greeks build an enormous horse. The horse's belly was hollow and a whole army could be put inside it. The best Greek warriors were inside the horse's belly and the others got into their ships and pretended to sail away. Odyssus left Sinon, another Greek soldier whom he tied up in chains, near the horse. Odysseus had told Sinon to tell the Trojans a pack of lies which would make them drag the horse into their city.

When the Trojans saw the huge horse on their beach and went up to it, Sinon told them that the Greeks had got tired of the war and left and that the horse was a peace offering to the gods. He told them that he had been left behind by the wicked Odysseus. Because he was in chains the Trojans believed him. Sinon also told them that the wooden horse had magic powers and would protect the city if it was kept inside. So the Trojans pulled the horse into their city and, feeling sorry for Sinon, they undid his chains and took him in. In the night while the Trojan army slept peacefully, relieved that the war was over, Sinon let the Greeks out of the horse's belly. They opened the gates of Troy for the other Greeks, who had only pretended to sail away, to enter the city.

The beautiful city of Troy was burned to the ground. The Greeks took away all its treasures. Its people, even Queen Hecuba and her daughters, were taken away as slaves by the Greeks.

However many of the Greeks suffered too, on or after their return journey, Agamemnon was killed by his wife Clytemnestra, who had been conducting an affair with Aegisthus in his absence. Odysseus took over ten years to get back, and then had to fight a battle to regain his kingdom.

Menelaus however had no problems. He took Helen back to Sparta where she lived happily as his queen.

THE STORY OF ACHILLES

The story of the great Greek hero Achilles is the subject of Homer's epic, the 'Iliad'.

Achilles was the greatest of the Greek warriors. He was prince of the Myrmidons and the son of the Nymph Thetis. At his birth his mother had asked the gods to make him immortal. They asked her to dip him in the river of immortality. To do this she had to hold him by one of his heels and the part of his body that remained out of the water was the one mortal part. This is from where we get the expression "The Achilles Heel", which means a weak spot.

The 'Iliad' begins with Achilles sulking in his tent and refusing to fight the Trojans because King Agamemnon has taken his girl, Briseis, from him. Achilles felt that this was unfair and wanted to teach Agamemnon a lesson. He knew that without him and his men the Greeks would fare badly.

Agamemnon was proud too. The Greeks had been fighting the Trojans for over nine years and he was not going to give up now.

Both sides were tired of fighting and had agreed to decide the battle with a fight between Paris, Helen's lover and Menelaus, Helen's husband. However the goddess Aphrodite did not allow Menelaus to kill Paris because she was very fond of him. So she made Pandarus the Trojan break the truce and shoot his arrow at Menelaus. But Menelaus was saved by the goddess Athene who supported the Greeks.

There were many acts of bravery by the warriors of both sides but neither side was able to win the war.

Hector was the bravest and ablest of King Priam of Troy's sons. No one could defeat him in battle and he was also a dutiful and fond son, husband and father.

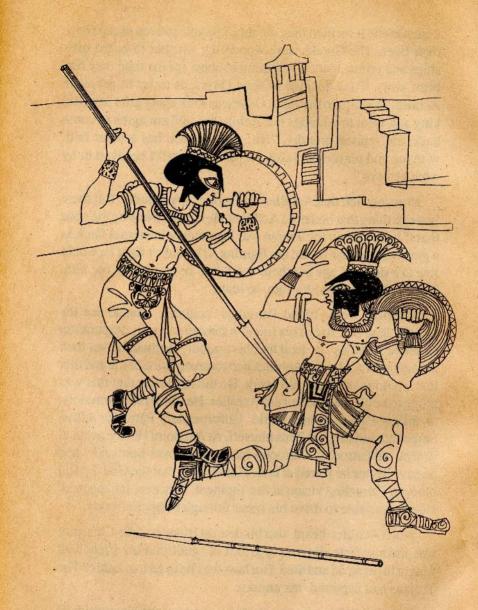
Without Achilles fighting for them the Greeks were sore put to defend themselves. Under Hector's leadership the Trojans were getting the better of them. They had been driven to their trenches and it seemed they wouldn't be able to even escape with their lives. The Greeks were wondering whether to board their ships and return without anything to show for the time they had been away. They decided to send Odysseus to try to persuade Achilles to return to the fight. Odysseus took many gifts from the king and went to Achilles but Achilles would not agree to come back and replied proudly, "No, Agamemnon has broken faith with me and played me false. Never again shall I be taken in by what he says."

Everyone felt that Achilles was acting very proudly. But there was one thing that bothered Achilles. He had been told by the gods that if he fought in the Trojan war he would win eternal fame as a great warrior but would die fighting. If he didn't fight he would live to a ripe old age but there wouldn't be any glory for him. It was a hard choice for him to make.

Achilles' best friend Patroclus couldn't bear to see the Greeks lose because of his friend's stubbornness. In desperation he asked Achilles to lend him his armour. He thought that then the enemy would think Achilles had returned to the battle and that this would make them run away. He did not know that this was going to be his end. Nether did Achilles. He asked his Myrmidons to follow Patroclus into battle. Unfortunately Patroclus killed Sarpedon, son of great Zeus himself. At this point Hector decided to seek out Patroclus. Patroclus had become over-bold and when he saw Hector he jeered at him. Homer says that the God Apollo blocked Patroclus' vision at that moment. However it happened, Hector was able to drive his spear through Patroclus' body.

When Achilles heard that his dearest friend had died, his grief was inconsolable. He was also full of guilt that his friend had fought in his stead and died. But how was he to go into battle? The Trojans had captured his armour.

But his mother came to his rescue and got the blacksmith of the gods, Hephaestos, to make him new armour and Agamemnon sent him many rich gifts and returned Briseis to him.



Achilles now entered the battle and there was a long and bitter fight between him and Hector.

At last Achilles killed Hector and, because he was so angry with the man who had killed his best friend, he dragged Hector's corpse round and round the battle field. In ancient times people believed that it was a terrible thing to harm a dead body or leave it unburied and so Achilles' action caused great grief among Hector's family - especially to his mother Hecuba and his wife Andromache. His father too could not bear the thought of his son's body being violated and against all advice decided to go right into the enemy's tent and ask Achilles for his son's body.

At this point the epic reaches the height of its tragedy. The picture Homer paints of the broken down old man, his grey hair wet with his own tears, pleading with the victorious warrior for the body of his son, is terribly moving. What is even more heartbreaking is the fact that both leaders of men realise together that war is indeed a horrible thing and are united in their common sorrow for a moment.

As Priam pleads for the body of his son he tells Achilles, "I have brought myself to do a thing that no one else on earth has done. I have raised to my lips the hand of the man who killed my son."

Priam reminds Achilles of his own father whom he will never see again and as he weeps with him he says, "We men are wretched things and the gods, who have no cares themselves, have woven sorrow into the very pattern of our lives." Thus moved, he allows Priam to take away his son and bury him.

Achilles himself is killed by Paris who is instructed to shoot an arrow at his heel by the goddess Aphrodite. In the end the Greeks win and the city of Troy is burned to the ground.

In this epic Homer tries to show the horrors of war very vividly. He also tries to show that human beings, even the bravest of them, are merely the playthings of the gods.

STORIES FROM THE ODYSSEY

The 'Odyssey' is a continuation of the 'Iliad'. It is the story of one king's return from Troy. This was Odysseus. He took twelve long years to get back home and on the way he had many adventures. These are some of his feats.

The land of the Lotos Eaters

A terrible storm drove the ships of Odysseus (often called Ulysses too) far beyond the way to his country of Ithaca. He found he was in the land of the Lotos Eaters. This place was a beautiful island but there was danger. If anyone ate the food he did not want to leave the place.

The sailors of Odysseus ate the food. All they wanted to do was to lie around the island under the shade of the trees to continue eating. Fortunately Odysseus did not eat anything. But he had to tie up his men and drag them back to their ship by force.

In this way he managed to save everyone from the land of the Lotos Eaters.

In the cave of Cyclops

In the course of their wanderings the ships of Odysseus came to a lovely island. Nearby was the island of Giants. These had many goats and sheep. They made cheese and ate bread. Odysseus decided to explore the island. He chose twelve men and they set off.

They soon came to a huge cave filled with food. They sat down to eat.

"Let us take the cheese and the animals and go away," begged his men, but Odysseus said he wanted to see these famous oneeyed giants in person. He should have listened to his sailors. When the giant came back he saw his visitors and immediately ate two of the men. Odysseus called to him and said, "The gods have told you never to harm a stranger."

The giant, Cyclops, laughed. "You are mad to think we care about the gods. We are stronger than them." He ate two more men. Odysseus and the others groaned. Cyclops went to sleep but no one dared to kill him because there was a huge stone over the cave's entrance. No man could roll back that stone.

The next morning Cyclops ate two more men. Then he let out his sheep and goats and rolled back the stone, leaving Odysseus and his men inside. But Odysseus was a very clever man. While Cyclops was away he sharpened a long stick he found in the cave.

"We will drive this into his eye," he said. "When he cannot see us he will roar with pain and open the cave's entrance for us."

That night Odysseus offered Cyclops wine after his meal of two more men. Cyclops liked the wine.

- "Because you have given me wine," he said, "I shall eat you last of all."
 - "Thank you," said Odysseus.
 - "What is your name?" asked Cyclops.
 - "No Man is my name," answered the cunning Odysseus.

As the giant slept Odysseus and his men drove the heavy spear into the eye of Cyclops. He screamed in pain and leapt up.

- "What's the matter?" asked his neighbours.
- "No Man is killing me," roared the giant.
- "If no man is killing you, go back to sleep," they said and left him alone.

In his pain Cyclops had rolled back the stone of the cave. He could not see at all but he felt for anyone who tried to leave the cave. Odysseus and his remaining men could not get past those hands.

Now Odysseus showed his cleverness. He tied his men to the underside of the sheep and when the giant felt them he did not feel under the animals. The men escaped to their ship, but Odysseus could not resist taunting the wounded giant.

"Cyclops," he called over the waves, "When people ask who blinded you, tell them it was Odysseus of Ithaca."

Cyclops shrieked in rage. He prayed to the god Poseidon, god of the sea, who was his father. "If you are are really my father," he begged, "Grant that Odysseus will never reach his home. At least grant that he will take a long, long, time to do so and that he will lose all his men"

Not knowing of this prayer, Odysseus sailed on happily for the moment.

The story of Circe

Poseidon, god of the Sea, was angry with Odysseus and the winds blew his ships all over the ocean. One day they came to the island of Circe, the Enchantress. She gave men a drink that changed them into pigs and that is what she did to some of Odysseus' men. Odysseus decided to rescue them.

He buckled on his sword and went towards the great palace of Circe. On the way the god Hermes met him and gave him a magic herb.

"Eat this," he said, "and Circe's drink will not hurt you."

Circe met Odysseus with smiles and welcomed him into her palace. She gave him a drink but when nothing happened to him she grew frightened. Odysseus pulled out his sword.

"You must be Odysseus," she cried. "Only he could withstand my magic drink."

"Give me back my men." Odysseus ordered. She did as he said. Soon all his men were with him again. They were overjoyed to be men again after their lives as pigs.

Circe treated Odysseus very well and he and his men stayed there nearly a year.

The song of the Sirens

On a rock in the ocean sat the beautiful Sirens. They were women who had the loveliest voices in the world. Any man hearing their voices forgot everything else and rowed as fast as he could towards those enchanting voices.

Odysseus knew that his ship was coming near to the rock of the Sirens. He wanted to hear their voices but he did not want to be caught by them. Men who went towards the rock were all dashed to death against it.

So he got a large ball of war. He melted it into small pieces and he blocked his sailors' ears with wax. They could not hear the Sirens' song. Then he got himself tied to the mast so tightly he could not get free on his own.

He warned his sailors not to listen to him even if he ordered them to sail to the rock. "Ignore my shouts," he said. "Don't even look at me."

The sailors tied him up, and sailed on. Soon the song of the Sirens drifted across the waters. Odysseus had never heard such voices before.

"Turn the ship," he screamed at his sailors. "Turn towards the rock."

They ignored him. He twisted and turned but the ropes held him fast.

"I'll whip all of you," he yelled again. "No one will escape my punishment."

Fortunately the sailors could not hear a word he was saying. They simply sailed past the rock of the Sirens, who could not understand how a ship of men could do this.

Soon the danger was past and the men saw that Odysseus was quiet again. They freed him from his bonds and congratulated themselves on their escape. But Odysseus never forgot the song of the Sirens.

Today, if we want to say that a woman is especially attractive to men, we call her a siren.

Penelope and Telemachus

While Odysseus was being driven here and there by Poseidon, god of the Sea, his wife Penelope was facing troubles of her own. Odysseus missed her and his son Telemachus, and they missed him desperately.

Penelope was a beautiful woman and, since Odysseus did not return home with the other kings of Greece, people began to think he was dead. Many men came to marry the beautiful Penelope. They stayed in the palace of Ithaca and would not leave until she promised to marry one of them.

Penelope had a plan. She told these men that she would only marry after she finished weaving a tapestry. They agreed. Each day she would weave the tapestry and each night she would undo most of the stitches. In this way three years passed.

But one day she was caught unravelling the stitches. Her suitors realised she had tricked them. They began to demand an answer. So Telemachus sent for a soothsayer. He came and warned the suitors that Odysseus was not dead and would come back one day to punish the men who were living in Ithaca and troubling his wife and son so much.

Home to Ithaca

By now, Odysseus had been nearly twelve years at sea. He had lost all his sailors and ships. He was alone in the land of the Phaeacians. But the king helped him. He gave him clothes, gold and many expensive gifts and sent him home in one of his own ships.

The Goddess Athene knew that Odyssee would be killed by the suitors if he set foot on Ithaca unprotected. She decided to help him. When his ship landed in Ithaca she caused a cloud to hide Odysseus. He could not even recognise his own city through it.

She took him into a cave and told him she would look after his money and gold. Then she turned him into an old man so that no one would know him. She told him to go to the hut of his old steward, Eumaeus, who would help him.

Disguised as he was Eumaeus did not recognise his old master, but that night Athene whispered into the ear of Telemachus, "Go down and visit your old steward." He did this and the next morning Odysseus saw his handsome son standing before him. He was filled with joy but Telemachus did not know him. Athene touched Odysseus once more and he changed from being an old man into his former muscular and good-looking self.

Telemachus and Odysseus fell into each other's arms and soon Odysseus was told the story of the suitors living in Ithaca.

"There are more than a hundred men, father," said Telemachus. "How can you and I fight them alone?"

"I have a plan," said his father, "Go back to the palace and I will come in a little while dressed as a beggar. Even Penelope will not know who I am."

Athene turned Odysseus into an old man again and he went to the palace. The suitors treated him badly and one of them threw a stool at him. It hit him on the shoulder and he thought to himself that man would be the first one to die that day.

Penelope and the bow

Now Penelope come into the hall carrying the great bow that Odysseus had used before going off to the Trojan wars. The suitors wondered what she was doing.

"Men," she called. "You have been in my palace for a long time feasting and drinking and I am tired of it. Today you must compete for the honour of marrying me. Any one of you who can string this great bow and then shoot through twelve axe handles can marry me. I will leave Ithaca and go with him for then I will know Odysseus is dead."

All the suitors tried but no one could do it. Finally the old man asked to try. The men laughed loudly.

"How can you do what we strong men could not do?" they asked.

Without a word, Odysseus took up his old bow. He ran his hand lovingly over it. He then picked it up and quickly strung it and shot his arrow cleanly through the twelve handles to the far side of the hall.

The suitors sprang to their feet in fear. Just then, Athene touched Odysseus again. At once he changed into the tall, handsome king of Ithaca. The suitors were almost paralysed. Without waiting to speak Odysseus shot his first arrow into the throat of the man who had thrown the stool at him.

"It is Odysseus," screamed the suitors in fear. "Run for your lives." They tried to get away but under the arrows of Odysseus and his son all the man soon lay dead.

Home at last

Penelope could not believe that Odysseus had returned at last. There had been so many men pretending to be the lost king she needed some proof that this was really her husband. Odysseus had changed a lot during the last twelve years.

So she tested him with a bed. She had the bed made up with fresh sheets and linen but she moved it to a new place. As soon as Odysseus entered the room he cried, "Who has moved the bed? I grew an olive tree near this bed. Only I would trim it and keep it smooth. Only I knew the secret. Now it is all changed."

Then Penelope knew that this was indeed her husband. She flung herself into his arms. Thus came to an end the wanderings of Odysseus.

THE AENEID

The 'Aeneid' is a legendary narrative about the imagined origin of the Roman nation. It is an epic poem. An epic is a long narrative peom, full of action, which tells about human life and makes us wonder about the relationship between man and the gods. The main characters in epics are heroes, that is, people who are in some ways stronger than ordinary men and yet not as powerful as the gods. Very often, epics show clashes between heroes and gods.

The 'Aeneid' tells of the Trojan prince who was said to have escaped during the sack of Troy and sailed, with other Trojans, to the west coast of Italy where they founded early Rome. The epic describes the many trials they had to face before they finally arrived at their destiny.

This story is significant for the role the gods take in men's affairs. Just like in the 'Iliad' the gods take sides. Aeneas was supposed to be the son of Venus, the Roman name for Aphrodite the goddess of love, so she supported and aided him. Juno the wife of Jupiter, king of the gods, bore an ancient grudge against the Trojans, dating from the time of Paris and the apple. Her favourite city was Carthage and she wanted Carthage to be the centre of the world. So she did everything in her power to thwart Aeneas.

Aeneas is a little different from the heroes of the 'Iliad'. He often has doubts and fears about carrying on his task. For the better part of the time he is obedient to the will of the gods and it is more with their help than his own strength that he succeeds, He is living proof of the two beliefs that the Romans held on to very strongly - namely, "avoid excess in anything" and "be true".

The 'Aeneid' was written at a time when the Romans were interested in establishing their past glory. We must remember it was a work commissioned by the Emperor Augustus. However, it is the poet Virgil's genius that he has produced a work which rises over and above his commission to reach true poetic heights and makes us ponder about how people behave and how their lives are affected by what is right and wrong.

The story of the 'Aeneid' begins in the middle. After many trouble-filled days at sea Aeneas and his followers had landed at Carthage. Here they have been welcomed by its queen Dido and, after a hearty meal, Aeneas tells the company present of his adventures.

"Let me begin at the time when Troy fell, tricked by the cunning of Ulysses. The night was full of bloodshed and the unexpected shock of it disordered our minds.

However, as I saw great heroes like King Priam fall I was gripped with horror and made up my mind that my own family would not suffer such a fate. So I gathered my family and a band of loyal followers and left burning Troy. We ran through the burning streets to the ships and in this chaos I lost my beloved wife Creusa. This was indeed a hard blow but now I was committed to a cause and had to proceed, though we wept to leave our homeland.

During our travels we arrived at many places. We sailed to Delos where, during our sacrifices to Apollo, we were heartened to hear it prophesied that our descendants would be famous.

We next landed in Crete and I thought to make it our home. But we were struck by pestilence and Apollo warned us that this was not our appointed home. So we moved on. When our ships were well out on the high seas a storm broke out and for three days we were stormtossed and scattered

Saved from this storm we landed on the shores of the Strophades, which in Greek means the Turning Islands. Here live the Harpies birds with the faces of girls and a terrible smell about them who swoop down on you as soon as you are about to eat and ruin your meal with their filth. We tried to fight them, but our swords would not wound them. Then Celeano, their leader, cursed us and said we would suffer terrible pangs of hunger because we had attacked them. However, she also said that Italy was to be our final destination.

My companions were afraid and lost heart at Celeano's words. But my father Anchises, whom I had carried on my shoulders out of burning Troy, gave offerings to the gods and prayed to them and urged us not to lose heart but to sail on. Often, during our travels when we

were down and out, it was the gods, especially Venus and Apollo, who advised and encouraged us.

When we landed at Buthrotem, we found that Helenus, Priam's son and a Trojan prince, had been accepted as a king by the Greeks there. He had also married Andromache, formerly the wife of the Trojan hero Hector. They were overjoyed to see us and it was good to be able to talk of old times. Helenus was a prophet and he too reinforced the prophecy that Italy was our true destination and that our tribe would found a great nation there. However, he said we would meet with many hardships and that we should not lose heart but should offer sacrifices to the gods, especially mighty Juno, and ask their help.

He then told me that I should seek the prophetess at Cumae and force her to tell me my future. We stayed here for some time and at last parted sadly.

We then had to steer close to the dréaded dangers of Scylla and Charybdis, where many ships have perished between the rocks and the whirlpool, and then we reached Cyclopes, the island of the horrible giant Cyclopes. Here we met Achaemedes, a Greek who had been left behind by Ulysses in the hurry of their escape. He was dirty and starving and pitiful to look at. We took him with us. The next moment we saw Plyphenius, one of the one-eyed Cyclopes, himself. As he walked into the sea the ocean trembled and we fled in terror.

We decided to avoid Scylla and Charybdis and sail backwards for a bit and at last arrived at the harbour of Drepanon. It was here that my most trusted friend and supporter, my father Anchises, died."

Queen Dido had listened to Aeneas' account with growing sympathy. She had been a widow for many years. The sight of this handsome man and the many trials he had to endure aroused many emotions in her.

Virgil suggests that Venus, Aeneas' mother, was afraid that the Carthaginians would have harmed Aeneas and his followers and so she made Dido fall in love with Aeneas. Be that as it may this sequence of events ended in a terrible tragedy.

Dido was building a powerful and beautiful city as she had fierce enemies on either side of her. Juno approached Venus and said, "Let us share this great nation between us and have equal power over it. Let Dido marry Aeneas."

But Venus suspected a deep plot and cautiously asked Juno to sound her husband Jupiter on the matter.

The next day, while Dido and Aeneas were out hunting, a storm arose and they had to take shelter, by themselves, in the same cave. Here they found they couldn't resist each other and Dido stopped caring about keeping up appearances. In her mind she was convinced that this union with Aeneas amounted to a marriage. Aeneas and Dido now spent their days together without a thought for the affairs of the government.

Jupiter heard of this and grew angry. He sent his messenger Mercury to tell Aeneas that his destiny lay not in Carthage but in Italy.

Aeneas was struck dumb by the message. Although he loved Dido he knew he had to obey the will of the gods. He did not know how to break the news to Dido and decided on a cowardly plan of action. He asked his men to make secret preparations to leave, telling himself that he would inform Dido when the moment was right. But Dido realised he was planning to leave her, and turned on him furiously, accusing him of breaking his promise to her.

Aeneas answered her with patience, thanking her for all her help to the Trojans but denying that they were married or that he had ever made any promise of fidelity to her. He made it clear that his destiny was in Italy. But Dido railed at him all the more. She sent her sister Anna to appeal to him. But Aeneas was unchanging.

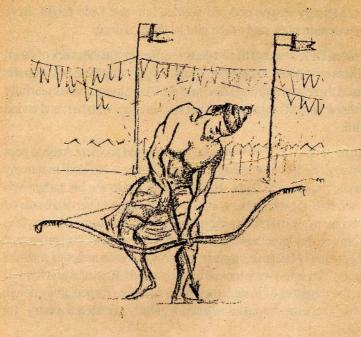
Dido realised that all was lost for her. Not only was her heart broken, but her neigbours had been offended by her alliance with Aeneas and, now that she was left unprotected, they were sure to attack her. She formed a cunning plan to accomplish her own death. She told her sister that she wanted to burn everything that reminded her of Aeneas and asked her to build a tall funeral pyre and place all his stuff on it. Aeneas was asleep that night, hoping to set sail in the morning, when Mercury reappeared and warned him that Dido might have some cunning plan, and asked him to leave at once.

When Dido saw that the Trojans were leaving at the crack of dawn madness seized her. At first she thought of pursuing them but soon she realised there was nothing she could do. She cursed Aeneas tearfully and threw herself on his sword that she had kept with her, and ended her life.

In most epics the hero visits the Underworld and here Aeneas goes down after he leaves Carthage, to see his father. He also met many legendary characters there. He wept with joy to see his father who showed him the glory that was to be the heritage of his descendants. In this passage Virgil shows the glory of the future Rome. He also tries to connect this greatness to the aristocracy of the Trojan heroes. Perhaps this is because, though it was the common belief that the shepherd boys who were looked after by a wolf, Romulus and Remus, were the founders of Rome, they were not quite respectable enough and the Emperor Augustus wanted a greatly elevated ancestry for Rome.

Aeneas and his followers finally arrived in Italy at a place called Latium. King Latinus ruled here and he had a daughter, the princess Lavinia. Aeneas wanted to found his kingdom in Latium so he asked King Latinus for the hand of his daughter in marriage. King Latinus agreed but by doing this he greatly angered Lavinia's former suitor Turnus. In his fury Turnus waged war on Latium, a war which lasted a long time and cost many lives. At last, after this long and bloody battle, Aeneas was victorious and founded the city that was to become one of the world's most glorious empires in the time of Augustus.

THE RAMAYANA



The story of the 'Ramayana' is at the very heart of Indian culture. Twenty five centuries have passed since the hermit Valmiki wrote this beautiful epic but every step of Rama's supposed journey is well-known in India today. Every year thousands of pilgrims make the journey to the hill of Citra-kuta where Rama is supposed to have met Valmiki. Many barefooted pilgrims end their journey by climbing the hill.

The story of the 'Ramayana' is supposed to be based on incidents that took place between the tenth and twelfth centuries B.C. (Before Christ), when there were two powerful nations called the Kosalas and the Videhas.

Dasa-ratha, the story goes, was king of the Kosalas. He had four sons, Rama son of Queen Kausalya, Bharat son of Queen Kaikeyi and the twins Lakshman and Satrughna, sons of Queen Sumitra. Dasa-ratha ruled the people of the city of Ayodhya with a father's love.

Janaka, king of the Videhas, ruled the city of Mithila. His beautiful daughter Sita is still thought of as the perfect woman in Indian lore. She is said to have been miraculously born out of a field furrow. Janaka set a difficult test of strength for the princes who wanted to marry Sita. The prince strong enough to bend his bow would marry Sita. This dreaded bow was called 'The Bow of Rudra' and was the symbol of strength to the Videhas.

Prince Rama went to Mithila to seek the hand of Sita. When presented with King Janaka's test he first prayed humbly to the gods for help. Then he lifted the bow, and bent it till it snapped and the earth shook with its force. Janaka was impressed by Rama and gave him his daughter Sita as his bride.

The epic describes the wedding as a grand event. The two royal fathers met and greeted each other warmly. Rama's brothers too found wives in Mithila. King Dasa-ratha and his sons then returned to Ayodhya. Rama and Sita lived very happily together in the palace for some time.

Meanwhile King Dasa-ratha had decided that it was time he gave over the kingdom to his eldest son Rama. He was a just king and therefore he talked with his people before deciding finally. The elders and people of Ayodhya agreed with Dasa-ratha that Rama was rich in gifts and glory and that he could be trusted to rule wisely. However, while the city was being richly decorated for the coronation, a plot was being hatched in the palace. Manthara, Queen Kaikeyi's maid, whispered poisonous words in her ear. "How can you be happy at Rama's coronation? Don't you know he is jealous of Bharat? When Rama becomes king he will do away with him." At first Queen Kaikeyi would not listen to the evil old woman. But her mother's love made her fear for her son and she thought of a wicked plan to make him king.

The night before Rama's coronation King Dasa-ratha found Queen Kaikeyi weeping bitterly in her chamber. The old king loved her dearly and promised her anything she wished for to make her dry her tears. Kaikeyi bound him to his word and made him promise to crown Bharat king instead of Rama. The king was

full of grief but in his foolishness he had given his royal promise. At dawn, he could not meet Rama's eyes and Rama knew at once that something was terribly wrong. It was Queen Kaikeyi who brought him the news that his father had promised the kingdom to Bharat for fourteen years and that Rama, if he wanted to be true to his father's wishes, should agree to live the life of a hermit in the forest for fourteen years.

Rama accepted his fate calmly and left for the forest. The faithful Sita was determined to go with him although he told her of the dangers of life in the jungle. His youngest brother, Lakshman, also said he would go with him. There was great sadness in the palace because of their leaving. Queen Kausalya and Queen Sumitra were full of sadness at parting from their sons. The love the people of Ayodhya had for Rama can be seen by the fact that they wanted to go into the forest with him. He had to steal away in the night to stop them from following. The various stages of Rama's journey in the forest are described in beautiful detail in the epic.

In the 'Ramayana' the course of events follows a logical order of cause and effect. There is a reason for King Dasa-ratha to suffer as he does. In his youth, while hunting he had accidentally killed a hermit boy. This boy was the only comfort and help of his aged parents. Although unknowingly, Dasa-ratha had committed a terrible crime. The boy's father told him that he too would suffer the loss of a son. Dasa-ratha died of grief soon after Rama left Ayodhya.

One of the most touching points of the story is where Bharat, hearing of Rama's departure, refuses the throne and follows him into the forest. Rama tells his brother he must go back and rule and gives him good advice on how to rule well.

The story now changes from describing the quiet life of Rama and Sita in their forest hermitage to more stirring events.

Surpa-nakha was a Rakshasa princess, the sister of Ravana, king of Lanka. She met Rama and fell in love with him. But Rama

told her very definitely that he could love no one but Sita. Surpanakha then turned to Lakshman. But he too turned her down. Feeling insulted she complained to her powerful brother. To punish the two proud princes Ravana plotted to take Sita away from them.

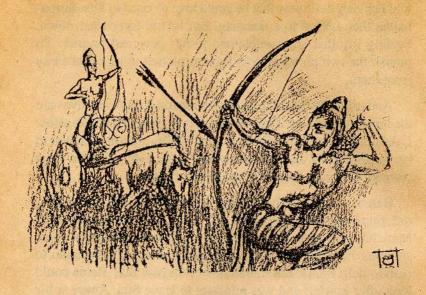
According to Indian thinkers the misfortunes of our lives are the results of our sins. Thus, in this story, a dark suspicion against Lakshman crossed the stainless mind of Sita and this resulted in her suffering. At all other times Sita is the symbol of the ideal woman. Sita paid dearly for her sinful thought.

Rama went into the forest to battle with the Rakshasas, ordering Lakshman not to leave Sita's side. The cunning Rakshasa Maricha set a trap for Lakshman by imitating Rama's voice shouting for help. Sita was very upset and urged Lakshman to rush to help Rama. Lakshman however knew that Rama could look after himself and was reluctant to leave Sita. Angry at his delay, Sita accused him of wishing his brother dead because he wanted her for his wife. Lakshman was sad rather than angry at her accusation. He left Sita to find his brother.

Ravana now came near Sita in the clothes of a hermit and carried her away to Lanka.

Rama was deeply grieved to find his Sita missing. With a heavy heart he began searching for her. The 'Ramayana' talks of many things that happened during the sad prince's wanderings. One of the most important of these is the incident where Rama helped the monkey prince, Sugriva, to kill his enemy Vali and get back his throne. In return Sugriva sent messengers to search far and wide for news of Sita.

The main messenger sent by Sugriva was his half brother, Hanuman, who was supposed to be the son of the Wind God Vayu and had many magical powers. It is said he leaped across the channel dividing Lanka from India. Hanuman saw Sita grieving for her Rama in Ravana's court. He gave her a token of love from Rama and took back one of hers to him. Before he left Lanka Hanuman set fire to a great part of Ravana's city.



Ravana was alarmed and angry at the fact that Hanuman had found Sita. He decided to declare war on Rama.

Rama crossed over with his army from India to Lanka. A fierce battle followed. This battle is described in great detail. Ravana tried to use his supernatural powers as a Rakshasa to defeat Rama. But Rama and Lakshman were fighting for truth and honour so no evil power could defeat them. The battle went on for many months. One by one Ravana's chiefs were defeated and killed. Kumbha-karna, Ravana's brother and his strongest warrior, was killed by Rama. Ravana's son Indrajit was killed by Hanuman. Lakshman fought bravely many times with Ravana but it was finally Rama who took Brahma's bow and killed Ravana and rescued his Sita.

It now remained for Rama to be made king. The fourteen years being over, the party returned to Ayodhya and Bharat was only too glad to give his eldest brother the throne.

There was however a cloud of doubt over this happy moment. Everyone doubted Sita's chastity. They wondered how Rama could take back a wife who had been so long in Ravana's kingdom. Sita prayed to the gods to help her prove to the people she had been faithful to Rama.

She decided to go through a test by fire to prove her innocence. Fearlessly she walked into the flames. Her beautiful form was hidden in the flames while the people waited anxiously. Slowly she came out unhurt and Rama then declared that he had never doubted his wife's faithfulness. The popular story now ends with Rama ruling Ayodhya with Sita as his queen.

There is a little-known and very sad ending to this epic. The people of Ayodhya doubted Sita even though she had proved her faithfulness. Rama was forced to send his beloved wife back to the forest. Sita found a home in the hermitage of Valmiki. There she bore twin sons - Lava and Kuşa.

After many years Rama performed a great horse-sacrifice to which many great kings and princes were invited. Valmiki came with Rama's two sons and there the boys recited the great epic, the 'Ramayana'. Rama recognised his sons and he longed again for Sita whom he had banished but never forgotten. He asked the poet Valmiki to send his wife back to him. Sita came but her heart was broken by unjust accusations and she begged the Earth which gave her birth to take her back. The Earth opened and took back its suffering child.

This part of the story bears a likeness to the Greek myth of Persephone where Persephone too is taken into the Underworld. Though the details of the stories are different, this may suggest a common way of thinking between Easterners and Westerners. The myth of Persephone may be seen as a colourful way of explaining the four seasons. The suggestion that Sita came out of the Earth and returned to it may connect her with the fact that all living things are part of the circle of life that comes from and goes back to the Earth.

TALES FROM THE MAHABHARATA

The Pandavas and the Kauravas

The Pandavas and the Kauravas were cousins. They were the sons of two brothers. The two brothers were Pandu and Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra was blind so Pandu ruled in his place.

Pandu had five sons and two wives. His wives were Pritha and Madri. He loved Madri best but both wives got on well. His sons by Pritha were Yudhishthira (the eldest and the wisest), Bhima (the strongest) and Arjuna (the best fighter). His sons by Madri were twin boys named Nakula and Sahadev. All five boys loved each other dearly and they were a united family.

King Dhritarashtra had a hundred sons. The eldest was Duryodhana.

When his sons were still boys King Pandu died and the blind Dhritarashtra became king. He was very kind to the five Pandava princes. He loved them as he loved his own children. The princes of both families were brought up together and taught the art of warfare together. The best teachers were hired to see that the Pandavas and the Kauravas were well educated and well trained.

But alas! From the beginning there was great rivalry and jealousy among the princes from the two families. The cousins did not get on too well.

1

The story of Karna

Queen Pritha (King Pandu's wife) had a dreadful secret which she kept locked up in her heart. When she was a young girl the Sun God had fallen in love with her and she had had a child by him. This son was born wearing golden ear-rings and he had a skin that no weapon could hurt. Pritha knew she could not keep this lovely baby.

Weeping bitterly, she put him in a basket and floated it down the river. A horse keeper named Adiratha found the basket. He had no children so he brought the baby up as his own. He named the child Karna.

One day, when the Pandavas and the Kauravas were grown up, their teachers went to King Dhritarashtra and asked him to hold a competition so that the princes could show their skill. The king was happy to do so even though he could not see the contest as he was blind.

The capital city of Hastinapura was decorated, with flags and lights. The people were happy that they were going to see the young princes and they brought garlands of flowers and coloured cloth to lay on the ground. Pavilions were built for the king and his court. Queen Pritha, mother of the Pandavas, was also present. Queen Madri had died but Pritha looked upon all the five boys as her sons. She was very proud of them and of the skill they showed.

The princes shot their arrows standing on horseback and wheeling around the targets. They had a mock-battle staged with elephants and another mimic-battle with chariots. The people cheered and clapped. Young Nakula was perhaps the best horseman. Bhima and Duryodhana fought each other but had to be parted since they forgot it was just a game and began to fight in earnest.

Prince Arjuna was the favourite of the day. When he wore his brilliant armour and glinting jewels he was a colourful sight. The crowd roared approval.

"Why are the people cheering?" asked Dhritarashtra.

"Arjuna is coming," they answered.

The king smiled happily. "I am glad, "he said. "My brother's children are as dear to me as my own. They shine like sacred fires in the kingdom."

Arjuna was quick and light. His arrows were shot so fast it seemed he was hardly bending his bow. His sword was like lightning though the sky. He was the best that day.

Duryodhana did not run to congratulate him. He was angry and jealous. Although he was an excellent fighter he was not as good as his cousins. He wished he knew someone who could beat the Pandavas in these games of skill.

Then suddenly a strange thing happened. The trumpets sounded and into the arena strode an unknown warrior. He was dressed in golden armour. He looked like the Sun God - tall and proud. The crowd stopped cheering. They wondered who this stranger was.

"Why is the crowd so silent?" asked the blind king.

"There is an unknown warrior in golden armour," said Pritha, but as she said these words she saw the golden ear-rings of the warrior and she knew that the young man was her own son whom she had floated down the river so many years ago. She grew pale and trembled.

"Who is the young man?" asked the king.

"I do not know," she replied, forcing herself to speak.

"What do you want, young man?" asked the king.

"I wish to perform every deed of Arjuna's," he replied. "Everything that he did, I can do better."

Arjuna was furious but the young man did as he said. He was as good as Arjuna himself. Duryodhana praised him saying, "Surely the victory is yours. What is the prize you want? Ask me and I will give it to you."

"I only want one thing." the golden armoured stranger replied.
"I wish to meet Arjuna in single combat."

Arjuna snatched up his sword and the two men fought for a long time. Surya the Sun God helped Kama while Indra the Rain God helped Arjuna. Pritha sank down in sorrow to see her two sons fight each other, not knowing they were brothers.

Down in the arena the announcer stepped forward to call out the names and titles of the two fighters before they could continue their great battle. He called out Prince Arjuna's noble name. He than asked Karna what his titles were. Poor Karna trembled. He thought he was the son of a horse keeper. He bowed his head and was silent.

Duryodhana called out, "A man must be judged on his deeds, not his birth. I shall give the kingdom of Anga to Karna. Now he is a king."

Karna looked gratefully at Duryodhana. "What can I give you in return, great prince?" he asked.

"Give me your friendship, Karna," he said.

"You have it for ever," said Karna and the two men embraced.

Just then, the horse keeper Adiratha came forward and Karna fell at his feet for he thought it was his father. The Pandava brothers laughed in scorn and anger. "What is this?" they cried. "Did the son of a horse keeper dare to fight with the great Prince Arjuna? He is the son of a servant. He is no warrior."

Karna grew pale with anger. He looked up at the sun. He did not know why but the sun always gave him strength. He did not know the Sun God was his father. Arjuna left the field angry that he had fought with a low-born man. The people did not know who had really won the day. Some said it was Arjuna, others said it was Karna.

Only Duryodhana was happy. He had not only found a friend but had also found someone as skilful as his hated cousin, Arjuna.

The marriage of the Pandavas

Dhritarashtra was a good man. He decided to give the kingdom to his nephew, Prince Yudhishthira, the eldest son of his brother. Duryodhana was angry.

"What is this?" he cried. "I am your eldest son. I am as good as he is. I will not stand this insult."

Dhritarashtra was torn. He loved both his son and his nephew. So he divided the kingdom and the Pandavas had to leave Hastinapura. They went to live in a beautiful palace in Varanavata but Duryodhana had it built in such a way it burnt to the ground.

Everyone thought the Pandavas had been killed in the burning house but they had escaped by a tunnel under the ground. They walked through the forests and faced many difficulties. Bhima carried his mother, Pritha. They dared not go back to Hastinapura since Duryodhana was their enemy. So they told no one who they were and went to live as ordinary potters in the land of King Drupada.

King Drupada had a beautiful and clever daughter called Draupadi. It was time for her marriage and King Drupada decided to hold a Swayamvara so that she could choose her own husband from among the many princes who would come.

The Pandavas decided to go to the Swayamvara.

"There will be food and gifts for us all," said Yudhishthira to his brothers. "Let us all go and watch." So they went along.

Drupada wanted a strong man for his daughter so he had made a special bow - which could only be bent by the strongest man in the land. Beyond the bow there were some gold fish behind a revolving wheel. Anyone who could hit the fish with an arrow had to be a master bowman.

Duryodhana and his brothers came to the Swayamvara. So did Karna, the low-born king of Anga. Draupadi was brought forward and shown to all the kings who were there that day. The five Pandavas looked at her and they all fell in love with her. But what could they do?

As expected, Kama the king of Anga was the only one who could bend the bow and shoot the fish. But before he could begin to shoot, Draupadi spoke.

"I am the daughter of a king. I will not marry the son of a horse keeper."

Slowly Kama lowered his bow. He looked at the sun in silence. He flung down his bow and walked away. King after king tried to bend the bow but no one could do it. Arjuna could stand still no longer.

He stood up and walked into the arena. His hair was unkempt and he wore poor clothes. No one recognised the great Pandava prince.

Before anyone could stop him he picked up the mighty bow, shot five arrows through the wheel and the five fish were killed. The crowd cheered and Draupadi looked hard at the man who had performed this deed. Her eyes began to shine.

"Only Arjuna could do such a thing," she said to herself. "He must be still alive." She went up to him and threw the marriage robe about him. The other kings were upset. They murmured among themselves. Before they could do anything the five Pandavas took Draupadi by the hand and prepared to defend themselves. They slipped away into the crowd and vanished.

"They must be the Pandavas," people cried. "Only Arjuna could have bent that bow."

In the meantime the happy brothers took Draupadi back to their mother. Now Pritha had a habit of telling her sons that they should share everything alike. She heard her sons calling to her.

"Mother," they shouted happily. "Come and see the gift we have brought you."

"Whatever you have brought must be shared," she called back from inside the house.

So it came to pass that Draupadi became the bride of five brothers. She took them back to her father, king Drupada. They threw off their potters' disguises and became princes again.

They were all very happy for the moment.

The Gambling Match

After the marriage of Draupadi to the Pandavas everybody got to hear that they were not dead. Duryodhana was furious but his father, the good King Dhritarashtra, was very glad. He sent for the Pandavas and re-divided his kingdom. In their half of the kingdom the Pandavas built a great city called Indraprastha and lived there happily.

But Duryodhana was jealous again. He planned how he could bring down the Pandavas. He went to his uncle, Prince Shakuni, who was a gambler who never lost. Shakuni, was a cheat. He played with loaded dice so he could never lose. Duryodhana senta message to the Pandavas to visit him.

The cousins agreed. They took Draupadi with them. She was the most richly dressed princess among all the wives of the Kauravas on that day. After they had greeted each other, Duryodhana proposed a game of dice. Yudhishthira agreed although he guessed that he would probably lose. However, according to the code of Kshatriya (warrior caste) honour, he had to play whether he liked it or not.

The game began and Yudhishthira lost everything. He lost his gold, his jewels, his chariots, his war elephant, his herds of cattle and all his slaves. He then staked his kingdom and lost. Finally he staked his brothers and himself and lost again. "I have nothing left to lose," he stated at last. "I am your slave."

"You do have one thing left," said Shakuni slyly. "You still have your wife to stake."

Foolishly Yudhishthira agreed while his brothers looked on aghast. They could do nothing, however, as Yudhishthira was their older brother. Again Yudhishthira lost. The Kauravas were delighted. Duryodhana's brother Dushasana told a servant to go and bring Draupadi into the hall.

"You cannot do that," said someone in horror. "She is a queen."

"She is not a queen any longer," laughed Duryodhana in triumph. "Bring her here at once."

A servant went to Draupadi. She was seated with her ladies with her lovely hair loose. She was happy. The servant gave her his message. Draupadi's face grew dark with anger.

"Did my husband lose me before or after he lost himself?" she asked.

"After he lost himself, queen."

"Then go back to the hall and tell everyone that once he had lost himself he was a slave with no possessions. Therefore I was not his to lose."

The servant went back with her answer. Duryodhana then sent his brother Dushasana to drag Draupadi into the hall. He did so and she came dragged by her loose hair.

The king of Anga, Karna, laughed at her.

"You refused to marry me because you said I was low-born," he taunted. "Where are you now? You chose wrongly."

Duryodhana too intended to humiliate the Pandavas as much as possible.

"Pull off her sari," he directed. Draupadi stepped back and sobbed bitterly.

"Is there no one here to speak for me?"

The Pandavas hung their heads in shame. They could not speak since they were now slaves. Dushasana began to pull offher sari but lo and behold! As he pulled, the sari became longer and longer. The more he pulled, the more material there was. All the kings and princes present were too surprised to speak.

At last Bhima could stand it no longer.

"This is your fault," he raged at his older brother.

"For shame," cried Arjuna. "You cannot find fault with our elder brother."

Bhima turned to Dushasana. "I will one day tear your heart out," he promised.

Just as the Pandava brothers were about to be taken into slavery someone ran to the blind king and told him what had been happening in the hall. He rushed to the place.

"My son, my son," he said to Duryodhana. "What vile deeds are you doing?" He turned to Draupadi. "Ask me for a wish, my dear," he said.

"I ask the freedom of my husband Yudhishthira," she said.

"You have it. Now ask for another boon."

"Give me the lives of my four other husbands," she said again.

"You have them. Now ask me for one more boon."

"No," said Draupadi proudly. "You have given me the lives of the Pandavas. They are men of courage and skill. They can build their fortunes again." Those listening were amazed by her strength of character and her faith in the five Pandavas. But Duryodhana was upset.

"You are letting the Pandavas go in anger," he told his father. "They will surely seek revenge and there will be a terrible war. Let them gamble once more. If they lose they must go into exile for twelve years and live in the jungle for one year. In this way we will avoid bloodshed."

Once more the dice were cast. As expected Yudhishthira lost and the five Pandavas along with Draupadi left Hastinapura. As they walked away Draupadi cried, "My hair will remain unbound until the day that Bhima kills Dushasana." And on that note of hate the Pandavas went into thirteen years of banishment.

The end of the Mahabharata

There are many more stories of the 'Mahabharata' and of the enmity between the two great clans of Pandavas and Kauravas but they are too many to relate here. Eventaually the thirteen years of exile came to an end and the kings of India prepared for war.

Both Yudhishthira and Duryodhana went to Lord Krishna for help. He had come to earth as an Avatar and was also a cousin of both clans.

"I will give one side my army and the other side myself," he said. "You are both my cousins and I must help both sides."

Yudhishthira chose Krishna himself and Duryodhana gained the help of Krishna's army.

The story of the battle is too detailed to tell. The Pandavas were victorious but Duryodhana and his brothers fought bravely and well. All the Kauravas were killed.

Before the battle Pritha had told Karna, her first-born son, who he was. In spite of knowing he was the eldest brother of the five Pandavas, Karna refused to desert Duryodana. Several times during the great war he saved the Kauravas from total defeat. In the end he sacrificed himself for the friend who had given him so much.

When finally Arjuna was able to kill Karna, Duryodana wept bitterly. "Oh Karna, my Karna," was all he could say.

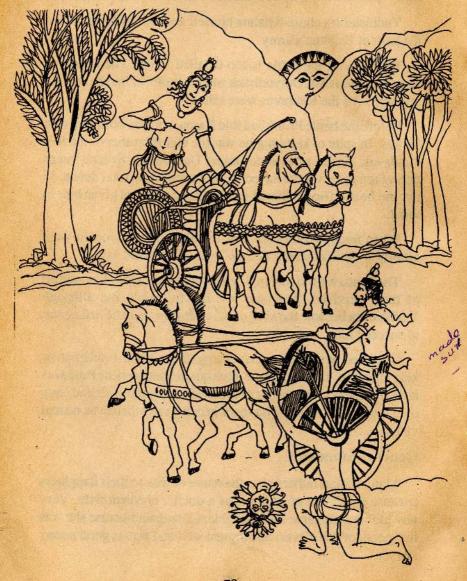
The Pandavas too suffered badly even though they won and all of them survived. Draupadi lost her five sons and although Yudhisthira became the king of the entire kingdom he had no son to succeed him.

In the end he chose Yuyutsu, Duryodhana's half-brother, to be king after him. Thus ended the great quarrel between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. It had been brought about by the pride and envy of many people. As often happens in many wars there was no real victor.

General comments

Many Indian fathers give the name of Sita to their daughters because Sita, wife of Rama, was a docile, obedient wife. Very few Indian men name their daughters Draupadi because she was independent and clever. She argued well and was as good as any lawyer.

It is also said that the magic weapons used by the warriors of the 'Mahabharata' sound very much like nuclear weapons. One wonders if indeed they had knowledge of such weapons at that time.



KING ARTHUR AND HIS KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

A young man called Arthur was very fond of his brother Kay. So when Kay said that he had left his sword behind in the churchyard he offered to go and get it for him. Arthur went back and looked all over but he could not find Kay's sword. But there was a great shining sword stuck in a rock which did not seem to belong to anybody. Arthur took the sword to Kay. When their father, Sir Ector, saw this he was very surprised and ordered Arthur to put the sword back. By this time there was a great gathering of nobles round the rock. Most of them had tried earlier to shift the sword and failed. After Arthur had put it back they tried again, and again they failed. Arthur pulled it out quite easily once more. Great was his astonishment when he found the whole assembly kneeling before him and proclaiming him their king.

For the sword Arthur had taken from the rock was the famous Excalibur and it was believed that only the rightful king could wield it.

This is how the legend of King Arthur begins. It is one of the greatest stories treasured by the British. Not only does it tell of how one man united the scattered tribes of his nation and, determined that its spirit should not be broken, fought hard to keep back the Saxon invaders; it also tells of how, after he became king, he tried his best to rule justly and fairly, stressing the values of honesty, courage and loyalty in his court.

Arthur, who pulled Excalibur out of the rock, was not really Sir Ector's son. He was the illegitimate son of King Uther who is supposed to have ruled Britain in the 5th century A.D. This was the time when Christianity had not yet taken hold of the nation and magic ruled supreme. The wizard Merlin was said to be all powerful. In fact it was Merlin who had taken Arthur from his mother when still a baby and given him to Sir Ector to bring up as his own son. It was Merlin who had said that only the rightful king would be able to wield Excalibur and it was Merlin who now stood beside Arthur to guide him.

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Arthur became king just after the Romans had withdrawn from Britain. The country was divided into many tribes ruled by chieftains. Often they fought amongst each other. King Uther had died leaving no heir. The people were suffering without a leader.

Once Arthur became king he invited the other leaders to join him. Won over by the justness of this young king many knights joined his court. Arthur built himself a beautiful castle called Camelot and so developed what is believed even today to have been one of the most perfect periods of rule in history.

King Arthur wanted to make sure that all his knights felt equally important. So he built a round table at which they sat and discussed all matters of state. This way no one sat at the head of the table and none had an unimportant place.

Arthur had to fight many hard battles before he could secure the boundaries of his kingdom. During one of these battles he was wounded and taken to the Castle of Cameliard. There the lovely Princess Guinevere, daughter of King Leodegrance, nursed him. Arthur fell in love with her and made her his queen.

Many brave knights came from far and wide to join King Arthur's court. They swore to be loyal to him and to keep to the rules of chivalry emphasized in his court. By chivalry was meant all the qualities a knight should have such as bravery, kindness, honour and a sense of fair play. The stories of their brave deeds would fill many books.

Perhaps King Arthur's bravest and most famous knight was Lancelot du Lac (Lancelot of the Lake). Lancelot was said to have got his strength from being absolutely pure and sinless. It is said that he challenged Arthur and, having found that Arthur was the only man he could not defeat, he bowed before him and offered him his services.

Magic seems to have played a big part in Arthur's life. It was magic that helped him become king. It was magic again that helped him defeat Lancelot. For no sword made by man could outdo Excalibur. Magic was also Arthur's undoing. During one of

his journeys into the forest Arthur had met the beautiful Morgan Le Fay. Following a strange attraction he had made love to her. She bore him a son, a golden-haired, evil boy named Mordred. It was Mordred's armies that brought about the final downfall of Camelot.

As is seen in many myths and legends a beautiful woman is often the cause of great ruin. In Arthur's court too it was the beautiful Guinevere who was the cause of the breaking up of the Round Table. Guinevere and Lancelot found themselves falling in love with each other. Perhaps Arthur was too busy being a king to be a husband. Perhaps Lancelot was so handsome that Arthur looked ordinary next to him. Perhaps Lancelot and Guinevere just couldn't help what was happening to them.

Lancelot was an honourable knight. Whatever he felt for his queen he did not allow his feelings to get out of hand. But the other knights noticed their close friendship and accused Guinevere of being unfaithful. According to the law, if she was guilty, she would have to be burnt at the stake for treason. Arthur was heartbroken at the thought of having to judge his queen. As king, he couldn't defend her. She needed a champion. Arthur set a deadline. If by that time no champion had come to save the queen, she would have to burn.

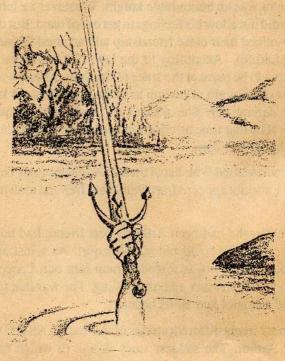
The court waited with bated breath. A few minutes before the deadline Lancelot appeared, set Guinevere free and took her away with him.

Lancelot, who had been Arthur's best friend, had now committed treason. He could not stay in court. As a just and lawabiding king, Arthur was forced to hunt him out. Lancelot was forced to gather an army against his king. The war that followed destroyed Camelot and all its beauty.

There are many different stories of this battle. All end with the death of Arthur. The saddest story is one in which faith and loyalty are both destroyed. The evil Mordred offered to help Arthur fight Lancelot. Arthur accepted his help. In the thick of the battle Mordred turned against Arthur. Arthur was defeated as much by a broken heart as by his wounds in battle. The last that was heard of Lancelot was that he turned round and began fighting for his king. He fought bravely but, attacked on both sides, he was killed.

When Arthur's faithful knight, Sir Bedevere, saw that he was wounded, he dragged him away from the battle. The story goes that Arthur ordered Sir Bedevere to throw Excalibur back into the lake. To his surprisc Bedevere saw a hand reach out of the water and pull Excalibur down. The magic sword had found its resting place.

Many of Arthur's bravest kinghts had died in battle. Queen Guinevere spent the rest of her days in a convent. A great legend was destroyed by the very people who built it.



Activities for Extensive Reading

The following are examples of the types of activities and exercises that can be used to encourage both reading and other language skills. These can be applied to all the texts, with necessary changes, ie. debates, dialogues, analyses of various sorts can be done with a range of topics on all texts.

Tales from the Mahabharatha

 Read The Pandavas and the Kauravas and The story of Karna.

What feelings do you think the following characters have?

(a) Pritha (b) Karna (c) Duryodhana

- 2. Describe what happened at the competition in Pritha's word. Do not use more than 300 words.
- Read The marriage of the Pandavas.
 What feelings do you think the following characters have?
 (a) Dhritarashtra (b) Karna
- Describe what happened at the swayamvara in Draupadi's words. Do not use more than 300 words.
- Read The Gambling Match. Write out the discussion that took place between the Pandavas after the match. Act it out.
- 6. Read the rest of The Mahabharata. Imagine that Yudhisthra met Duryodhana, while the latter was dying. What would they have said to each other?

Read The Ramayana.

- 1. Summarize the story in less than 500 words.
- Describe the different emotions felt by the following at different points in the story:

(a) Dasa - Ratha (b) Sita (c) Ravana

- 3. Write out the dialogue that took place between Rama and Kaikeiyi when Rama came back as king of Ayodhya. Act it out.
- 4. Write out a discussion between Lava and Kusa in which one blames Rama for what he did to Sita and the other defends him.

Read King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

- 1. Who was most responsible for the disaster that happened?

 Present arguments to how that it was
 - (a) Arthur (b) Lancelot (c) Guinevere
- 2. Write the story of Arthur from Merlin's point of view.

Read The Aeneid.

- 1. Was Aeneas to blame for the way he treated Dido?

 Present arguments for both points of view.
- Compare Arthur and Aeneas as rulers.
- Construct a dialogue between Arthur and Aeneas as to the problems women can present to rulers.
- 4. Construct a dialogue between Dido and Guinevere about the difficulties of having relationships with rulers.

Read The Fall of Troy

- 1. Think of adjectives to describe

 (a) Helen (b) Agamemnon (c) Paris

 Divide these adjectives into those that describe

 (a) physical appearance (b) social position (c) moral qualities
- 2. How many different stories can you find here? Give different titles for each of these stories.
- 3. Draw up a list of characters mentioned here and note after each of them to which of these different stories they belong. Draw a graph to show how they intertwine ie.

The quarrel between Atreus and Thyestes

Leda's Children

Aegisthus

Helen's Marriage

Clytemnestra's Marriage

4. Draw up a list of emotions people feel. Which characters share these emotions? ie. Revenge - Eris, Atreus, Thyestes, Clytemnestra.

Read The story of Achilles

- 1. What different feelings do you have towards Achilles as you read the story?
- Write out the dialogue that took place when Odysseus tried to persuade Achilles to come back to the war. Act it out.
- 3. Write out a dialogue in which Patroclus tries to persuade Achilles to return to war. Act it out.
- 4. Imagine a meeting between Thetis and Hecuba. Write out what they would say and act it out.
- Conduct a debate on the subject 'Women suffer more that men in war'.

Read Stories from the Odyssey

- Retell the first three stories in the first person as though
 Odysseus were telling them to his wife. Make them brief and
 interesting.
- Retell the next three stores as though Odysseus were relating then to his friends. Add questions that they would have asked.
- Write out the qualities of the various heroes you have read about.
- 2. Which hero do you think would have made the best (a) friend? (b) husband? Why?
- 3. Which hero best matches which heroine?

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