

UNITY IN THE DIVERSITY OF DIFFERENT RELIGIONS



DALJIT SINGH JAWA

Unity In The Diversity
Of
Different Religions

Unity In The Diversity Of Different Religions

*A compilation of Inspiring Quotes
AND
Stories from many faiths*

Daljit Singh Jawa

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Preface

It is a common belief, that since very early times, man has been trying to struggle for his survival and sustenance. In this struggle, he had to deal with not only other living beings, but also the natural phenomena, such as rains, floods, and droughts.

For dealing with other animals and insects, and living in security, he developed various hand tools and weapons, and formed groups or tribes with his fellow human beings. But he could not do anything to save himself from the dangers and devastating effects of such natural calamities as torrential rains, high floods, and earthquakes.

Depending on the geographical area, and other historical and cultural factors, different people developed different theories and beliefs about these natural phenomena and started believing in different supernatural powers or gods, and then one ultimate or supreme power, who controlled even these lesser gods, and powerful human beings. This gave birth to different systems of beliefs or religions in different parts of the world.

As is readily discernible from the recorded history, it is believed that in the east side of the globe, first developed the Sanatan, or Hindu faith. Then evolved Jainism, Bud-dhism, and Sikhism. Similarly in the west, first developed Zorasterism, then Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Bahá'í. Along with the above evolved unaccountable branches and offshoots of these faiths.

During his lifetime, the author (a Sikh himself) had the opportunity of dealing with and interacting with members of many faiths, and

briefly studying their scriptures. Con-trary to many misconceptions, propagated by the fanatics or misinformed persons, he has found that even though people of different faiths, may dress differently, eat differently, or worship differently, yet at their core, they are generally good people, who want to love, and be loved, and that is what their holy scriptures and their prophets, messengers, and Gurus really teach. In other words, there is Unity in The Diversity of Different Religions.

This book is a humble attempt of the author to prove his above hypothesis, by taking appropriate quotes from the holy scriptures, and true or mythological stories from different faiths, and show the readers, how at their core, all religions, and traditions, teach us to practice virtues, such as love, compassion, and forgiveness, and avoid vices, such as lust, greed, anger, and ego.

I hope the readers would find the quotes and stories worth sharing with others, particularly with their children, so that they all grow to become good human beings themselves, and love and respect all their fellow humans, irrespective of their faiths, cultures, or traditions.

I have generally written these stories on the basis of my recollection from the stories read or heard during my school days, or have adapted from various internet sites, and have tried to recognize and give credits to these sites. Wherever possible, I have even tried to contact these sources, and obtain their permission. If by any chance, I have missed to fulfill my legal duty, it is just due to my ignorance or oversight, but not due to any mal intent. I hope the copyright holders of these stories would be large hearted, and ignore my shortcoming, because, my main intent is to spread more goodwill, and love among people of all faiths, and not monetary profit. If anyone points out that I have not given due credit to his or her story, or would like to suggest some good story from his or her faith, I would gladly do that in the next edition.

I am very thankful to my family and friends, who helped me in collecting these stories, from different sources. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Amarjit Singh, and David Young for their valuable comments, and contributions. I must recognize my brother Dr. Manjit Singh Jawa, my friend Duane L. Herrmann, and my English teacher Mary Ann Wittman, who took so much time out of their busy schedule

to edit this manuscript of mine, and correct many mistakes. Lastly, I appreciate very much the efforts of Dan Pasley, the graphic designer, who worked hard to design a very beautiful and appropriate cover for this book.

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Unity In The Diversity Of Different Religions

Paragraph two of the US declaration of Independence begins with the statement:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Probably, it was this pursuit of happiness, which motivated some divinely chosen wise men (prophets), born at different times, and different places to ponder and devise the best ways to achieve this goal. The sum total of these conclusions was later given a name and called a religion.

These divinely wise men (prophets), were born at different times in history, and in different parts of the world, so they had to state their philosophies or advice, keeping in mind the different circumstances, cultural habits, and ways of life of people in that particular time and context. Therefore, it is but natural, that on the surface, these world religions appear so very different, and have often been blamed for so much tension, discord, and even terrible wars, among countries and nations of the world.

But if we study different religions objectively, we would find that basically all major religions try to teach their followers, common basic good values, such as honesty, truthful living, love, kindness, and compassion not only for their own families and friends, but also

for their neighbors, and even their enemies. In fact, there is so much commonality, that we won't be too much amiss in saying that there is Unity in the Diversity of Different Religions or even in the values and philosophies of atheists

Following are some quotes, which show, how different religions emphasize the same core values. Many of these quotes are obtained from "*World Scripture: A comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts*," a project of the International Religious Foundation, (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, USA, 1995).

Further, unless stated otherwise, the quotes regarding Sikhism, have been copied from the English translation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (SGGS) by Sant Singh Khalsa.

As for the stories included in this book, these have been adapted from various sacred books, internet sites, or recollections of the author from stories he read or heard during his teenage years. The author thanks all these sources and has tried to mention these specifically wherever he could do so.

Loving Kindness

Although stated in different words, all major religions of the world stress the quality of loving not just our own family and friends, but also our neighbors, irrespective of their faith, race, color, caste, or ethnicity. Some faiths even teach us how not only to forgive our enemies, but also to treat them with utmost kindness and compassion. This is evident from the following quotes from the scriptures, historical episodes, or legends from different faith traditions.

“Those who act kindly in this world will have kindness.”
(Islam, *Qur'an* 39:10).

What sort of religion can it be without compassion? You need to show compassion to all living beings, Compassion is the root of all religious faiths.” (Hinduism, *Basvani*, *Va-caana* 247).

“Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.”
(Christianity, I Timothy 5:1-2)

“Be kind to all beings, this is more meritorious than bathing at sixty-eight sacred shrines of pilgrimage and the giving of charity.” (Sikhism, *SGGS*, p.136)

“The world stands upon three things: upon the Law, upon Worship, and upon showing Kindness.” (Judaism, Mishnah, Abot 1:2)

“This is the Day in which God’s most excellent favors have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty grace hath been infused into all created things. It is incumbent upon all the peoples of the world to reconcile their differences, and, with perfect unity and peace, abide beneath the shadow of the Tree of His care and loving-kindness.” (Bahá’í, Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 6)

“We know that to help the poor and to be merciful is good and pleases God, but knowledge alone does not feed the starving man, nor can the poor be warmed by knowledge or words in the bitter winter; we must give the practical help of Loving-kindness.” (Bahá’í, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 61)

This-worldly concern of Confucianism rests on the belief that human beings are fundamentally good, and teachable, improvable, and perfectible through personal and communal endeavor especially self-cultivation and self-creation. Confucian thought focuses on the cultivation of virtue and maintenance of ethics. Some of the basic Confucian ethical concepts and practices include rén, yì, and lǐ, and zhì. Rén

(仁, “benevolence” or “humaneness”) is the essence of the human being, which manifests as compassion. It is the virtue-form of Heaven. Yì (義/义) is the upholding of righteousness and the moral disposition to do good.

(Confucianism, Wikipedia)

Brother Ghannaeaa

It was more than 300 years ago, when there was no Red Cross, or any other charitable organizations which would take care of or provide any kind of relief to the soldiers wounded or severely incapacitated in a war.

It was the time, when the most cruel and fanatic emperor, who had ascended to the throne after mercilessly killing his real brothers, and imprisoning his own father, was ruling India. The people of India were so terrorized, that nobody dared to raise his or her voice against any of the cruel or unjust orders of this king, whether it related to the demolition of their places of worship, assaulting their women, or forcibly making them change their faiths.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth Guru (prophet) of the Sikhs, took the courage to stand against this despotic king by organizing his followers into an army of saint soldiers. He advised them that in ordinary circumstances, they were to live like saints, always worshipping God and living a life of love and compassion for all, but if someone unjustly attacked them, or tried to terrorize any innocent human being, then they should be prepared to defend themselves, and other innocent victims.

Once, it so happened that Guru Gobind Singh Ji was resting in his chambers, and a few Sikhs (followers) were carrying on some casual conversation outside Guru Ji's chamber. Suddenly, they noticed rising dust in the distance, heard the noise of trotting of many horses, and the war cries of the king's soldiers quickly marching towards them.

The Sikhs immediately realized, that somehow the emperor's forces had found out that at this time Guru Gobind Singh Ji is in a very vulnerable situation, and it would not be very difficult for them to kill a small number of his Sikhs, and capture the Guru alive, and then receive a handsome prize from the king.

But the devoted Sikhs did not want to disturb their Guru with the news of this danger. Before the enemy soldiers could come nearer, the Sikh men and women armed themselves, and went out to engage the enemy at a distance, and prevent them from reaching near the Guru Ji's chamber.

As expected, a furious desperate battle ensued and the soldiers of both sides started being seriously wounded, or killed. While this carnage was going on an old Sikh named Ghannaeaa, who had been assigned the duty to give water to the wounded Sikh soldiers, was running around providing water not only to the Sikhs, but also to the enemy soldiers.

Although greatly outnumbered, the Sikh soldiers fought so fiercely and valiantly that deserting even their dead and injured fellow soldiers, the enemy soldiers abandoned the battlefield, and ran away as fast as they could.

After making sure that there was no more danger, the Sikhs happily started proceeding towards their Guru Ji, eager to relate this happy news to him. But at the same time some of the Sikhs, who had noticed brother Ghannaeaa giving water to the enemy soldiers, caught hold of him and proceeded to report this seemingly traitorous act of his to Guru Ji.

After duly praising and blessing the Sikhs for their alertness in sensing the danger, commitment to their Guru, and bravery, Guru Ji took the case of brother Ghannaeaa. He asked him, why he gave water to the enemy soldiers, thus helping them to rise again, and fight against the Sikhs.

"Guru Ji," brother Ghannaeaa calmly replied. "I did not give water to any Sikh or enemy soldier. I was giving water only to God."

He was then asked to explain.

“Guru Ji,” he answered. “You yourself have taught me, that we are all children of the same one God, and it is the same one God who abides in all beings. Therefore, we should see God in each and every human being. So I was in effect giving water only to God, and I don’t think it is a crime to give a few drops of water to God.

“Dear brother Ghannaeea,” Guru Ji replied with pride and happiness as he took out an ointment tube which he gave to Ghannaeea. “You have truly enshrined my message of universal love in your heart. So from now on when you go to any battlefield, not only give water to all the fallen and injured soldiers, but also apply ointment on their wounds, and provide other necessary first aid.

(Adapted from a true story in Sikh history)

Prophet Ali and His Mortal Enemy

Ali was the son-in-law of Muhammad, the first and the last prophet of Islam. Upon the death of prophet Muhammad, ignoring Ali, his followers first chose Abu Bakar, then Umar, and then Uthman as the Khalifas or heads of Islam. It was only in the fourth place that Ali was chosen as the new Khalifa.

Ali was a very noble, wise, and brave man. But there were many people who did not care about his qualities or his right to become Khalifa, and schemed to kill him to have their own favored person chosen as the Khalifa.

However, unmindful of the danger from his enemies, Ali kept ruling his kingdom with justice, mercy, and compassion, and kept regularly going to the mosque in Kufa (Iraq) for his daily prayers. One day, when with bowed head, Ali was saying his Namaz (prayer), a man suddenly came from behind, and attacked him with a long poisoned knife, then ran outside the mosque with the bloody knife in his hand.

Seeing this tragedy, some people immediately rushed to the aid of Ali, gave him first aid, and took him to his home for further treatment and comfort. Those outside the mosque saw the assailant running with the bloody knife, caught him, and brought him also to Ali's house for severe punishment.

By this time Ali was resting on his bed and about to drink some milk to quench his thirst. Upon seeing his assailant, who naturally appeared very much afraid, terrified, and thirsty, Ali put down his glass. He asked his attendants to first bring a glass of milk for his assailant

also, because he seemed so scared and thirsty. In this way, Ali showed mercy and kindness towards even his mortal enemy. Ali succumbed to his injuries after two days.

(Adapted from

<http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/imamali4.asp>-See e- mail dt,jul 23, 2016, from Akramulla Syed-islamicoccasions@hotmail.com

Androcles and the Lion

Once upon a time, when slavery was a common practice in many countries, the masters treated slaves very harshly. Slaves were made to do all kinds of hard labor day and night and were often given very little food to survive. If any of the slaves tried to escape, they were soon captured by the Master's soldiers, imprisoned in dungeons, and then mercilessly killed by being thrown before hungry beasts.

Androcles was one such unfortunate slave, who tried to escape by running to a thick dense jungle. But soon he found himself facing a giant ferocious lion. Naturally Androcles was terrified to his bones and looked for all the possible places to hide or run. When he looked once again at this giant lion, he saw that the lion was not making any preparations or gestures to pounce upon Androcles or devour him. Instead, it was trying to show its extended right paw, and looking at Androcles with miserable beseeching eyes. When Androcles looked closely at the lion's paw, he saw that there was a big thorn stuck in its paw and blood was coming from the wound.

Androcles immediately understood what the lion wanted, so he fearlessly went near it and very gently pulled out the thorn. Immediately the lion felt so much relief that it started licking Androcles's hand to express its thanks and soon disappeared into the jungle.

Androcles had no time to feel good about his deed, nor think about his next plan when the king's soldiers came looking for him. After putting him back in chains they marched him back to the city.

He was presented before the king, who ordered that Androcles should be put in a dungeon, and after one week he should be thrown before a hungry lion. He also ordered that all the residents of the city, including their slaves, must watch this spectacle, so that in future no other slave should dare escape.

On the appointed date, all the residents of the city, along with many slaves, gathered in a public arena. Poor Androcles, tightly bound in chains, was made to stand in the middle of the arena. Soon a ferocious lion, who had not eaten for many days, was let loose on him. Naturally the hungry lion immediately ran towards poor Androcles, as if it would devour him in a single morsel. But to the amazement of all the audience, when it came close to Androcles, the lion suddenly stopped and, like a pet animal, lovingly started licking Androcles' hands and feet. The entire audience, including the king, was completely surprised by this strange behavior of the hungry lion. The king sent his soldiers to see what was the reason. When they approached near the lion, with drawn swords, but still trembling in fear, Androcles addressed them.

“Please,” he said. “Do not worry. This lion has recognized me as the one who pulled a thorn from its paw a few days ago. For this act of kindness it would not think of hurting me nor will it hurt anyone in my company.”

The soldiers went back to the king and reported the entire story. Upon listening to this story, the king was very much pleased and ordered that both Androcles and the lion be set free.

(Adapted from Aesop <http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/type0156.html>- last checked on 7.13.17)

Serving Others

Akin to the quality of loving-kindness is the quality of serving others, which has been emphasized in all the religions, I have come across, or read about, as is evident from the following few quotes.

“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.”
(Christianity, I Corinthians 10:24)

“Without selfless service, no one ever receives the fruits of their labor. Serving others is the most excellent action.”
(Sikhism. SGGS, p.992)

“Strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world; by devotion to selfless work one attains the supreme goal in life. Do your work with the welfare of others in mind.”
(Hinduism. *Bhagwad Gita* 3:10:26)

“The best of men are those, who are useful to others.” (Islam, Hadith of Bukhari)

“Man must work with his fellows. Everyone should have some trade, or art or profession, be he rich or poor, and with this he must serve humanity. This service is acceptable as the highest form of worship.” (Bahá’í, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p.93)

Dashrath Manjjhi and the Mountain

Dashrath Manjjhi was a landless farmer in India who lived with his wife in a remote mountainous village. People living in that village had to go around a rocky mountain for hours to reach the nearest market town. So the villagers requested the government officials many times to at least cut a small path through the mountain. It would save them the time and trouble of trekking around the mountain. However, nobody listened to these poor helpless villagers.

One day Manjjhi asked his wife to bring some water for him from the pond, which was across the hill. On the way, unluckily, her foot slipped and she had a serious accident. It took Manjjhi and his neighbors many hours to take her to the nearest hospital where she ultimately died.

Touched by the loss of his beloved wife, Manjjhi approached his neighbors, asking them to help cut a path through the mountain so this kind of tragedy would not afflict others. None of them volunteered to join him, because the task seemed so difficult and impossible. Some even ridiculed him, for thinking about such a “foolish” idea.

Taking a hammer and chisel in his hand, Manjjhi started on this project all by himself. He would rise early in the morning, and start chiseling the mountain till late in the evening, without caring for any food or water. If some passerby or village neighbor brought him something to eat or drink, he would take that, otherwise he would continue his work till the evening.

He continued to chisel and cut through the mountain for almost twenty-two years, and was ultimately successful in making a 360-foot

long and three-foot wide path through the hill, accessible by bicycle, and motorcycle.

He neither cared for, nor received any recognition from the government, but ultimately died with the satisfaction that he lived a life of steadfast and sincere service to his neighbors for generations to come.

(Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dashrath_Manjhi- last checked on 7.13.17)

How 'Abdu'l-Bahá Served His Enemy

Bahá'u'lláh was a very kind holy man and was revered as a prophet by his followers. But there were many people who believed in existing traditions and would not tolerate his claims. Therefore, they persecuted him and his followers so much that ultimately he was exiled from his native country, Persia (Iran), to the Ottoman Empire.

There, his opponents forced him and his family to move to the prison city of Akka. After his death, his son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was released from prison and moved to the city of Haifa. There, he began to build a sacred shrine for his father's predecessor, the Báb. But his enemies spread a rumor that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was actually building a stronghold on Mount Carmel and would soon gather armies to challenge the government.

Believing this rumor, the Governor ordered that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, along with his family, should be brought back to the prison in Akka. 'Abdu'l-Bahá kept teaching his faith.

His enemies couldn't tolerate any such thing. They so effectively poisoned the ears of the new Governor, that he decided to take over all Bahá'ís shops and leave them no means of survival. However, before the police could come and take over the shops, 'Abdu'l-Bahá'í advised his followers not to open their shops the next morning. The police had to return empty handed. While the Bahá'ís' shops were still closed, orders came from the central government that the Governor had been removed from office and the police were ordered to escort the Governor to Damascus.

Hearing this news, instead of feeling any joy over his enemy's banishment from the city, 'Abdu'l-Bahá'í went to the Governor and, besides advising him not to feel sad, asked him what he could do for him.

The Governor was totally surprised and could not believe his ears, hearing such kind words from the one whom he considered his worst enemy. When he was assured about the sincerity and genuineness of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's offer, he said that he would feel most obliged if he could arrange to escort his family to Damascus also.

'Abdu'l-Bahá assigned this task to one of his most trusted followers. The Governor was overjoyed on meeting his family. He wanted to richly reward the escort, and send some costly presents for 'Abdu'l-Bahá to express his thanks. The escort politely refused any reward, saying that he was only obeying his Master's orders.

Then the Governor requested him to take a letter to his Master.

"Oh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá," he wrote. "I pray you to pardon me. I did not understand. I did not know you. I have done you great evil. You have rewarded me with great good."

(Adapted from "*Stories about 'Abdu'l-Bahá'*", Bahá'í Publishing Trust, India- E- mail dt. May 10, 2017 from **National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India to Daljit Jawa, copy** Baha'í Publishing Trust).

Gautama Buddha and the Pigeon

Gautama Buddha, whose childhood name was Siddhartha, was the founder of Buddhism. He was born at Lumbini Nepal. His father, Suddhodana, was the king of the small state of Kapilwastu. His mother, Maya Devi, was a very pious and compassionate lady, but she died immediately after the birth of Siddhartha. So, Siddhartha was raised by his aunt, the sister of Maya Devi. As was the custom in those days, his father consulted a sage named Asit Muni about the future of this young child. After examining all the signs on the child's body, and the configuration of the stars at the time of his birth, Asit Muni told the king that his son would either become a great king or a great holy man.

Naturally, the king Suddhodana preferred that his son should become a great king rather than a holy man. So, from the early age, he started to provide the young child all kinds of luxuries and give him training, so that he would grow up to be a brave warrior and a sagacious king, not a wandering holy man or recluse. As a further precaution, he appointed personal servants for the child who were instructed to provide him with all kinds of entertainments, but never to let him go outside the confines of the palace and see for himself how the people in his kingdom were actually living and struggling with their difficulties.

Prince Siddhartha obediently carried out his father's commands and became proficient in his studies, and martial arts, including the use of arms, such as sword fencing, and using the bow and arrows.

In spite of all the time spent in luxuries, entertainments and arms training, Siddhartha would find time to go and sit in his garden and

meditate. In this way, he grew up to be a very brave, kind, gentle and compassionate boy.

One day, when Siddhartha was sitting in his garden by himself, he noticed a small beautiful pigeon fall from the sky to the ground near him. He saw that the pigeon had been badly wounded and was struggling for its life.

Siddhartha immediately rushed to the aid of this wounded pigeon, called his personal servant and the royal physician who, after cleaning the pigeon's wounds, applied the necessary ointment.

Soon, holding a bow and arrow, Siddhartha's elder brother came looking for the pigeon.

"This is my pigeon," he said as he reached to pick it up. "I shot him out of sky, and I will enjoy its meat."

Siddhartha did not let him get to the pigeon, saying he won't let his brother do any such thing, because, since he saved the pigeon, it belonged to him. Before the dispute could grow further, the physician said that since the pigeon was his patient, he would take it to the king and let him decide, to whom it should be given.

Both parties went and presented their case to the king. After due deliberations with his ministers, the king decided that, although the elder son had a first claim on the pigeon, because he shot it down from the sky, yet in the final analysis, it belonged to Siddhartha but for whose timely help it would have died. In his view the love and compassion shown by the younger brother in saving the pigeon's life was more valuable than the marksmanship of the elder brother.

Siddhartha was given full custody of the pigeon. He took care of it for a few more days, and when it had fully recovered, he released it into the open so it could fly back to its family and friends and enjoy their company.

(Adapted from a story the author heard in school days)

Faith in One Supreme Power

No matter, by what name they call, whether it is God, Lord, Allah, Bhagwan, or Waheguru, almost all religions teach us to have faith in one supreme power who is the creator of this universe and all living beings in it. Most religions further teach us to love and worship this power, and consider all human beings as our siblings. Therefore, we should love them irrespective of their faith, race, or origin, as illustrated by the following quotes and stories.

“He is the Sole Supreme Being; of eternal manifestation; Creator, Immanent Reality; Without Fear, Without Rancor: Timeless Form; Unincarnated; Self- existent; Realized by the grace of the Holy Preceptor.” (Sikhism, Adi Granth, Japuji p.1, The Mool Mantra)

“And the scribe said unto him, ‘Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he: And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbor as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ And when Jesus saw that, he answered discreetly, he said unto him, ‘Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.’ And no man after that asked him any question. (Christianity, Mark 12:32-34)

“Your God is one God; there is no God but He, the merciful, the compassionate.” (Islam, *Qur’án*, Sura 2)

“Thou art the one God, the Incomparable, Whose help is implored by all men. From everlasting Thou wert alone, with none to describe Thee, and wilt abide forever the same with no one else to equal or rival Thee.” (Bahá’í, Bahá’u’lláh, *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá’u’lláh*, p.194)

Devotee Prehlad and the Demon King

This is a very famous Hindu legend. There once lived a king by the name of Harnakash. He somehow pleased God so much that he was granted these boons that no human being, no animal, and no natural element (such as water, air, or fire) could kill him. He was also blessed that he would neither die inside any room, nor outside, and he would not die during the day, or during the night. On being granted such boons, Harnakash thought that he had become immortal, and now even God cannot kill him. He became so puffed up and arrogant that he began to behave as if he himself was the all-powerful God. He issued a strict command throughout his kingdom: from now on every body should stop worshipping God, and instead, worship him. Anyone who dared to disobey this command would face a most torturous public execution, so no one else would dare disobey the king's orders.

But God has His own ways to show His supremacy, and teach lessons to such self-conceited persons. When Harnakash's own son, Prehlad, was sent to school, and was told to worship Harnakash, he refused to do so and started openly worshipping God. Seeing him, his other classmates also started doing the same thing. The teacher tried his utmost to persuade Prehlad to desist from God's worship, but he did not budge. Ultimately, the teacher went to the king, and reported how his own son refused to worship him, and insisted upon worshipping only God. As a result, emboldened by Prehlad's behavior, many other students also started following his example.

Coming to know about his own son's refusal to obey his command, Harnaakash was infuriated and became red with anger. He immediately summoned Prehlad to his presence. Hearing this news, Prehlad's mother became worried and afraid for her son's safety. She tried to intervene, and started counseling Prehlad to obey his father, and do as he wished. But Prehlad refused to waver from his faith in God and boldly presented himself to his father.

On finding Prehlad so obstinate, Harnakash gave orders to shut him down in a dark room and not to give him any food or water till he pleaded for mercy and started to worship Harnakash. But, even after many days in the dark dungeon, Prehlad did not make any call for mercy and kept praying to God. When Harnaakash found that the imprisonment did not have any effect on Prehlad's resolve, he ordered that he should be thrown from a high mountain. When this punishment was carried out, a tree on the hill slope miraculously saved him. Harnakash tried many other ways to get Prehlad killed, but every time, somehow or other, God kept saving him.

Infuriated at all these failed attempts, Harnakash finally took out his own sword with rage

"Let me see how God saves you now," he proceeded towards Prehlad.

At that moment, a strange entity, half lion and half human, came out of a pillar, and firmly held Harnakash in its paws

"Oh, Harnakash!" It roared. "I have come to save my devotee who kept his faith in me. Without going back on any of my boons given to you, I am going to end your reign of terror. Now, see for yourself, I am neither an animal, nor a human being, it is neither day nor night, and here placing you half inside the room and half outside, I am going to kill you with my teeth and sharp paws."

Harnakash tried to plead for mercy, but it was too late.

Because of his unflinching faith in God, Prehlad was saved. To this day, his story continues to inspire others to never waver in their faith and trust in God.

(Adapted from a hymnal story in the Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib)

Faith and the Fiery Furnace

Once upon a time, when king Nebuchadnezzar was ruling over Babylon, he installed a huge gold statue to celebrate his victory in a recent war. He issued strict orders that from now on all his citizens must worship this idol daily by playing many musical instruments such as horns, flutes, harps, and lyres. He further ordered that as soon as the citizens heard the sounds of these instruments being played in symphony, they must all bend down and start worshipping this idol. He commanded that anybody who dared to ignore or disobey this command should be thrown into a fiery furnace.

A few days after issuing of this order, the king was informed by one of his soldiers that except three Jews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, all citizens of his empire were regularly obeying his command and bending down in worship of his golden idol as soon as they heard the sound of symphony.

Hearing this news, he immediately commanded that these three Jews be arrested and produced before him. When bound in chains the Jews were presented before the king.

“Oh, Jews,” he declared in a thundering voice. “Is it true that you have knowingly, and willingly, disobeyed my command and have refused to pray and worship this gold idol of mine?”

“Oh, mighty king,” All three of them, boldly replied. “We do respect your commands, and faithfully obey them, but our faith prohibits us from worshipping any god, goddess, or idol, except the one supreme God, who is the creator of this universe.”

“I don’t know what god you are talking about.” The king said on hearing this reply. “I do not see him anywhere; therefore, you better worship and pray before this gold idol as all other citizens of my empire are doing, otherwise, I will order that all three of you should be thrown into this burning, fiery furnace. Then, I will see how this god of yours saves you from being burnt to death.”

When the king saw that this command of his did not scare the Jews, and they remained steadfast in their faith in the one supreme God, he ordered that all three men should be tightly bound together in chains, and thrown into the fiery furnace, which should be heated seven times more than usual.

The king’s guards immediately started to carry out his commands. They heated the furnace with extra fuel, and when it was heated to the highest degree possible, they bound the three Jews in strong iron chains, and threw them into the furnace. But, when after some time the guards looked down into the furnace, a big flame of fire leapt towards them and burnt them to ashes.

After waiting for a few minutes, the king and his companions climbed a nearby high place from where they could safely look into the furnace. To their amazement, they saw that all three Jews, along with another ghostlike figure, were walking in the furnace as if nothing had happened. Then the king realized that it must be God Himself, or His special angel, who had saved them.

He then went near the furnace, called them to come out, and proclaimed that from now on all his citizens should worship no one except the one Almighty God.

(Adapted from, *The Holy Bible*, Daniel 3:1-30)

A Little Girl's Firm Faith in God

Once, there was a king named Duni Chand, who used to rule over a large area near modern day Amritsar in Punjab, India. Duni Chand had five daughters. He loved them all, and used to provide them with all kinds of foods, comforts, and provisions for their enjoyment.

One day, all the five sisters were sitting together and talking about how good their father was. At one point, all the girls except the youngest sister Rajni said that they really depended so much on their father that if he were not to support them, or take care of them, they might have nothing to eat, or wear. But Rajni kept silent.

When asked about her silence, Rajni replied, that no doubt their father loved them very much, and provided them with whatever they need, yet ultimately it is God, who is the real provider and protector of all creatures. Even if their father stopped taking care of them, God would make some alternative arrangements for their care.

One of the sisters reported these remarks of Rajni to the king. Upon hearing this, the king became very angry and assumed that this girl of his was very ungrateful. Therefore, in order to teach her a lesson, he found out a totally handicapped leper and married young Rajni to him. Then, he kicked both of them out of his palace

“Let me see now,” he said to Rajni. “How your God provides for you, and your crippled husband.”

Without making any fuss, poor Rajni arranged to put her husband in a hand pulled wooden cart. She then began to go from place to place, looking for some menial job, which could provide them with their daily

food. While going on their search, she came to a small pool, surrounded by some trees. She left her husband under a tree near the pool, and went to the nearby village in order to earn some food.

After a long time, when Rajni came back, she noticed that, instead of her handicapped leper husband, a tall, dark, hale and healthy man was sitting in his place. She asked, him who he was. The man replied that he was her husband. At this point, Rajni started to object that this man was an imposter, and somehow had hidden or killed her real husband and now wanted to take advantage of her youth.

Hearing the noise, many people from the village came down and took both Rajni and this man, who claimed to be her husband, to Guru Ji, for adjudication. First, Rajni told her story, that how while talking with her sisters, she had expressed her view, that in reality, it is God who is the provider and sustainer of all of us, and not our parents.

Hearing this remark, her father became very mad. Therefore in order to teach her a lesson, he married Rajni to a handicapped leper and challenged her to show him who would take care of her and her husband.

Then Guru Ji asked the young man, who claimed to be her husband, to tell his story.

“When Rajni was gone,” the young man explained. “I was just looking around, waiting for my wife to come back, I noticed a very strange thing happening. First, I could not believe my eyes, but then, after making sure that I was not dreaming, I saw there were some black crows sitting on the tree above me. One by one, they would dive into the pool near me, and then fly out as white swans.

“I thought that this pool must have some magical qualities, so somehow I dragged myself out of my cart, and crawled to the pool. While holding on to a small plant, I managed to take a dip in the pool. When I came out, I found that all my leprosy signs were gone and I could move around like a normal healthy young man.

“As a proof that I am the same leper who was married to Rajni, I want to show you this hand of mine which I had to keep outside holding the plant. It is still afflicted with leprosy and cannot function like the other hand.”

Hearing this story, Guru Ji declared that this young man was truly Rajni's husband, and not an imposter. God has done this miracle to prove the truth of the firm faith of Rajni in Him. Hearing this news, Rajni's father also came there to confess his fault. Then he took Rajni and her husband back to his palace and accorded them due respect and honor.

Since then, this place is considered very sacred. The pool is now a part of a larger lake around Harimander Sahib. The tree under which Rajni's husband sat is known as Dukh Bhanjani Beri (meaning the pain destroying tree). People from far and wide come to take a dip in this lake particularly near this tree.

(Adapted from a tale in the Sikh legends).

Humility and Acceptance of God's Will

Besides the above qualities, all faiths try to teach us to be always humble, and accept God's will in all circumstances, no matter how unfavorable or unpleasant these circumstances may be, as is evident from the following quotes and stories:

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”
(Christianity, Mathew 5.5)

“Successful indeed are the believers, who are humble in their prayers.” (Islam, *Qur'an*, 23:1-5)

“Be humble, be harmless, Have no pretension.” (Hinduism.
Bhagwad Gita 13.7-8)

“Without merit am I; all merit is Thine. Thine Lord is all merits, by what tongue have I power to praise Thee.
(Sikhism, *Adi Granth*, Wadhans, M: 5, p.577)

“Be of an exceedingly humble spirit, for the end of man is the worm. (Judaism, Mishnah, Abot 4:4)

“Let your thoughts dwell on your own spiritual development, and close your eyes to the deficiencies of other souls. Act ye in such wise, showing forth pure and goodly deeds, and modesty and humility, that ye will cause others to be awakened.” (Bahá’í, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 203)

Guru Amar Dass Ji and His Rival

Guru Amar Dass Ji is the third Guru of Sikhs. Before being anointed as Guru, he was known as Bhai Amar Dass. He used to worship the goddess Vaishnav Devi and used to lead pilgrimage parties to her temple. In spite of living like this, and spending many years in such rituals, his mind still felt restless.

One day, by chance, he happened to listen to the sweet *shabad* (hymn) by Amro, his nephew's wife. He was so moved by the divine message of this hymn, that he immediately went and asked Amro to tell him who was this divine soul, whose message she was reciting.

She replied that she was reciting one of the hymns of the first Sikh Guru Nanak Dev Ji, who had departed to his heavenly abode. Now her father, Guru Angad Dev Ji, was providing spiritual guidance to his followers. Hearing this reply, Amar Dass Ji begged her to take him to her father,

The very next day both of them proceeded to Goindwal to see Guru Angad Dev Ji. Upon his very first sight of the Guru, Amar Dass Ji fell down at his feet and begged him to accept him as his disciple and assign him the most menial task of his household. So, Guru Angad Dev Ji assigned him the duty of daily going on foot to the nearby river and bringing water for his early morning bath.

Amar Dass Ji, who was about 60 years of age at that time, faithfully carried out this service for full twelve years, without missing a single day, no matter whether it was stormy, rainy, or freezing cold. Once, it so happened, that while it was still dark, he was carrying a pitcher full

of water on his head, his foot tripped over a wooden peg, driven by a weaver. He fell down, but did not let the water pitcher fall from his head. Upon hearing the noise, the weaver and his wife shouted some very insulting remarks against Amar Dass Ji.

When Guru Angad Dev Ji heard about this incident, how in spite of his old age of 72 years, he did not let the water for his Guru fall down, he was so pleased that, ignoring his own two sons, he anointed Amar Dass Ji the next Guru, and he himself departed for his heavenly abode.

Guru Angad Dev Ji's sons, particularly Dattu, did not like that Amar Dass, who was just their menial servant, should become the next Guru and they were totally ignored. One day, when sitting on a dais, Guru Amar Dass Ji was addressing his congregation, Dattu angrily entered the room, went straight to the dais and kicked Guru Amar Dass Ji.

"This seat of Guruship belongs to us," he shouted. "You are a mere servant of our household, and you better go away from here."

Seeing this kind of insult to their Guru, many of the Sikhs became enraged and rushed to give a severe beating to Dattu. Before they could do any such thing, Guru Amar Dass Ji quickly sat down on the floor and caught hold of Dattu's feet.

"Oh, respected son of my Guru," he humbly addressed Dattu. "You are so young, and your bones are still so delicate and soft, but with age my bones might have become too hard and might have hurt your poor delicate bones. Please let me massage your feet so that your pain may become a little less. As per your orders, I am right away leaving from here to go back to my ancestral place in Basarke."

Guru Ji immediately went out of the room, rode back to his house in Basarke and closed himself in a room. He put a note on the entrance door, saying anyone who tried to enter would be severely cursed.

In spite of Dattu's efforts, the Sikhs refused to accept him as their Guru. They soon found out the whereabouts of Guru Amar Das Ji. To avoid the curse, they made a big hole in the back wall, entered Guru Ji's room, and reinstalled him as their true Guru.

(Adapted from a story in Sikh history)

Prophet Mohammad and an Arrogant Woman

Prophet Mohammad was in the habit of daily going to the mosque for prayers. There was only one road which led from his house to the mosque. So he had to traverse this road every day, both while coming and going. Along the road were many houses. In the upper floor of one of those houses lived a woman who was in the habit of sweeping her floor about the same time Mohammad was passing beneath her house. It is not known whether this woman had any grudge against the prophet, or she did not have any manners, but as soon as she was done sweeping, she would collect all the trash in a small pan and throw it out of her upper floor window making sure that it fell down on the prophet. Then she would keep standing in the window to see how angrily the prophet responded to such an insult. To her disappointment, the prophet would simply dust off the droppings, smile, and proceed on his way to the mosque.

Seeing this response from the prophet, the woman would become all the more determined to insult him the next day with much more trash. The woman tried many days, but she could not get any negative response, not even a single angry word or gesture from the prophet.

One day, when the prophet was passing below the window of this lady, no trash came down. The prophet was so used to her behavior that he stood waiting for the trash thinking that maybe the lady might be a little late. After waiting for a long time, when no trash came down, the

prophet became worried. Not caring about the disparaging comments of the neighbors, he climbed the stairs leading to that woman's upper floor apartment and knocked on her door.

When the woman came out, and saw that it is the same man on whom she daily threw her trash, she became very terrified, and was about to say some words in apology.

“Oh, my respected lady,” prophet Mohammad humbly said. “You don't need to have any fear that I have come to scold you or harm you in any way. I have come to ask why you did not honor me with your ‘blessings’ today? Are you okay, and not suffering from any illness or trouble? If yes, please let this servant know, so that he may be of some service to you and you may soon recover your complete health and resume blessing me with your trash like before.”

Hearing those most humble and sweet words, the woman was moved to tears and begged him to pardon her.

(Adapted from a story, told by a Muslim friend of the author).

A King and His Wise Minister

Once upon a time, there was a very popular king who had a very capable and efficient council of ministers to guide him. Among his council of ministers was a very God-loving and wise minister who truly believed that whatever God does is for our best. Therefore, no matter what happens, we should always readily accept every event in our life as God's will, and be always thankful to Him for everything that occurs in our life. As a result, whenever the king was discussing any new incident or happening in his kingdom, or even a sickness in his family, this wise minister would praise God

“Let us thank God for this favor,” He would say.

One time the king developed a serious boil on one of his fingers and, in spite of many efforts to cure, it did not heal. It worsened so much that ultimately this finger had to be amputated. One day the king was sharing his grief over the loss of his finger with his council of ministers and all were expressing their concern and sympathy.

“Let us thank God for this favor on our great king.” the wise minister remarked.

Hearing this, the king became very mad at him. He immediately ordered that this minister should be put in the darkest dungeon, and let us see if he would still keep saying, ‘Let us thank God for this favor.’

With the passage of time the king got used to having one less finger on his hand, and resumed his normal activities and pastimes, including hunting.

In one of his hunting expeditions the king lost his way and got separated from his companions. He was caught by a gang of robbers. They were returning to their hideout after a very successful robbery in a nearby city. Before starting on this adventure, they had pledged to their goddess that if their robbery was successful they would sacrifice a full grown, hale and hearty human being.

When they saw this king, who was in ordinary hunting attire, they caught hold of him, securely bound him with ropes, and took him to the goddess's temple. But, when they placed him on the sacrifice platform and were inspecting to make sure that he was securely bound and would not be able to move or jump off the platform when set on fire, they noticed one of his fingers was missing. The chief of the robbers, who was very superstitious and a stickler for details, determined that this man was no good for their sacrifice. Therefore, they let him loose and decided to look for another suitable victim.

The king was pleasantly surprised at this development. As soon as he was able to find his way to his palace, he went immediately to the dungeon where his wise minister was imprisoned.

"Oh, my wise and faithful minister," the king said after releasing him. "You were right. As suggested by you, I should have been thankful to God for the loss of my finger. I am very sorry, instead of listening to your advice, I threw you in this dungeon and made you suffer through such tortures."

"No your highness," the minister replied after hearing this. "You need not apologize for anything. I believe that my imprisonment was also a God's favor upon me, and I am extremely thankful to Him for this."

"How could that be a God's favor to you?" the king asked in amazement.

"Your majesty," the minister replied. "If I were not in prison, I would have accompanied you on your hunting trip and, unlike others, I would have never forsaken you. When you lost your way the robbers would also have captured me along with you. Being a complete person, with all my limbs intact, they would have sacrificed me instead of you."

(Adapted from a story told by my high school teacher).

Imam Husain and His Wise Maid

Imam Husain was one of two sons of Ali, the son-in-law of prophet Mohammad, and fourth Khalifa of Islam. Once, Husain's maid slave unwittingly dropped hot soup on her Master. Naturally, she was very scared that her Master was going to severely punish her.

"Those who control their Anger..." she immediately began to recite from the Qurán before Husain could say anything.

"I am not angry," Husain smiled and said.

"...and are forgiving towards people..." the maid continued as soon as she heard his words.

"I have already forgiven you," Husain responded.

"...Allah loves those who do good," the wise maid then completed the quote.

Husain was so pleased with this wise maid that he set her free.

(Adapted from *Holy Qurán*, Surah Aal-e-Imran (3), verse 134)

The Story of Job

Once upon a time in the land of Uz, lived a man by the name of Job. He was a very righteous person, always kind and merciful to the poor and the needy. He stayed away from any kind of evil habits, such as lust, anger, greed, or slander.

He was blessed with abundant wealth and possessions in the form of many houses, hundreds of cattle, camels, land holdings, and many servants. He was also blessed with seven obedient sons and three loving daughters.

One day, while discussing the behavior of men on earth, God said to Satan that his servant Job was a very upright and blameless person who very much reveres Him. But, Satan replied, Job's uprightness and respect for God was only due to the fact that God had blessed him with all kinds of riches pleasures of family and happiness. The real test of his virtues and faithfulness would come if all his possessions, wealth, and family were taken away from him. God accepted Satan's challenge and allowed him to take away from Job, what he wanted, except his life.

So one day, when all Job's sons and daughters were eating and drinking at the house of the eldest son, a messenger came to Job and told him that a large gang of thieves suddenly came to his place, killed all the servants, and stole all their cattle. While he was telling this story, another servant came and told that suddenly a tornado came, uprooted the house in which all his sons and daughters were eating and drinking, and killed them all. Even after hearing such tragic news one after the other, Job did not lose his peace of mind but quietly rose, tore open his shirt, and bowed down in prayer.

“God gave, and God has taken away, blessed is God’s Name.” Job said.

Observing this attitude of Job of happily accepting God’s will, and to test him further, Satan obtained permission of God to afflict Job’s body with boils and make him sit in ashes. Seeing this pitiable condition, Job’s wife asked him to curse God and die.

“I wonder if cursing God would bring us any good, I fear we may receive even more evil.” Job said thoughtfully.

Then job lamented the day he was born, and wished to die. Even this wish of his was denied. While living in this abject condition and misery, three of his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, came to console him. Job contrasted his previous fortune with his present miserable plight. His friends suggested that his present suffering might be due to some sin he might have committed in the past. To this, Job responded that throughout his life he did not commit any evil act, he always stayed away from evil ways and always tried to remain righteous, compassionate and benevolent to the poor and needy. A just God would not treat him so harshly and He would not make his creatures suffer so miserably.

Then, another younger friend, Elihu, came to console Job and offer some words of wisdom. That did not satisfy Job. While this dialogue was going on, God spoke from a whirlwind and challenged Job’s wisdom. God asked Job to answer such questions as: where was Job, when He (God) laid the foundation of the earth, or the limits of the universe, and what did Job know about the time when the wild mountain goats bear their young, or when the deer gives birth?

Finding himself unable to answer any of God’s questions, Job acknowledged his complete ignorance in all such matters and confessed his folly in blaming God for any of his misfortunes.

“I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes,” Job confessed.

Hearing these words of humility and repentance, God became merciful, and blessed Job with double his previous wealth and possessions. Job lived happily for one hundred and forty more years with many of his generations.

(Adapted from the book of Job in *The Holy Bible*)

How Bahá'u'lláh Resolved Conflict in His Community

At one time conflicts grew and rifts widened in the Bábí community (followers of the Báb). As baseless claims became more blatant, the hopes of the followers of the Báb sank lower and lower. With His station still unknown to the Bábís, Bahá'u'lláh (their wise leader) was amongst them and suffered with them. He was destined to change their misery to glory and their weakness to towering strength.

No sooner had Bahá'u'lláh started upon the task of rescuing the Bábís from their waywardness, than Subh-i-Azal, goaded by a few self-seeking individuals who had chosen to make him the instrument of their own treacherous designs, began to obstruct Bahá'u'lláh's benevolent lead. So fierce became the opposition engineered by Azal that Bahá'u'lláh decided to retire from the scene of contention. He had no wish to add to the injuries afflicting the Bábí community. One morning His household awoke to find Him gone.

He sought an abode in the mountains of Khurdistán. Such seclusion from the society of men has always occurred in the lives of the manifestations of God. Moses went out to the desert of Sinai. Buddha sought the wilds of India. Christ walked the wilderness. Muhammad paced the sun-baked hillocks of Arabia.

Bahá'u'lláh's self-imposed exile was a test, whether or not he was going to be the Guide capable of showing the right path to the Bábís, the only one who could restore to them their broken inner peace, their

vision, their serenity, their faith and determination. Only the passage of time, and His absence would prove conclusively that he was their next spiritual leader. Time did amply demonstrate this fact.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote of those days: "For a number of people who have never inhaled the fragrance of justice, have raised the standard of sedition, and have leagued themselves against us. On every side we witness the menace of their spears, and from all directions, we recognize the shafts of their arrows. Although we have never gloried in any thing, nor did we seek preference over any soul. To everyone, we have been a most kindly companion, a most forbearing and affectionate friend. In the company of the poor, we have sought their fellowship, and amidst the exalted and learned, we have been submissive and resigned. I swear by God, the one true God! Grievous as have been the woes and sufferings which the hand of the enemy and the people of the Book inflicted upon us, yet all these fade into utter nothingness when compared with that which hath befallen us at the hand of those who profess to be our friends.

"We betook ourselves to the wilderness, and there, separated and alone, led for two years a life of complete solitude. From our eyes there rained tears of anguish, and in our bleeding heart there surged an ocean of agonizing pain. Many a night we had no food for sustenance, and many a day our body found no rest.

"Notwithstanding these showers of afflictions and unceasing calamities, our soul was wrapped in blissful joy, and our whole being evinced an ineffable gladness. For in our solitude we were unaware of the harm or benefit, the health or ailment, of any soul. Alone, we communed with our spirit, oblivious of the world and all that is therein. We knew not, however, that the mesh of divine destiny exceeds the vastest of mortal conceptions, and the dart of His decree transcends the boldest of human designs. None can escape the snares He sets, and no soul can find release except through submission to His will.

"By the righteousness of God! Our withdrawal contemplated no return, and our separation hoped for no reunion. The one object of our retirement was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful, a source of disturbance unto our companions, the means of

injury to any soul, or the cause of sorrow to any heart. Beyond these, we cherished no other intention, and apart from them, we had no end in view. And yet, each person schemed after his own desire, and pursued his own idle fancy, until the hour when, from the Mystic Source, there came the summons bidding us return to the place from where we came. Surrendering our will to His (will), we submitted to His injunction.”

Gradually the fame of Bahá'u'lláh spread around the district of Sulaymáníyyih. None in the neighborhood knew His identity, but all were charmed by His kindness and wisdom.

In a widening circle, inhabitants of Baghdád also came to hear of the wise hermit in the mountainous regions of the north. They spoke of His knowledge, gentleness, piety and astonishing insight. The Bábís, bereft of the counsels of Bahá'u'lláh, and sinking ever deeper into the mires of conflict and dissension, longed for His guidance, but knew not where to seek Him.

No sooner did some of them hear of the Sage of Sulaymán-íyyih, than they saw behind that veil the very person of Bahá'u'lláh, and dispatched emissaries to find Him and implore His return. Bahá'u'lláh was surprised to see them, but he knew that he had to answer the call. This was the voice of God, the plan of Providence. Time had shown His indispensability to the community of the Báb.

On March 19th, 1856, Bahá'u'lláh returned to Baghdád. His absence had lasted two years. Henceforth the Bábís gladly welcomed his power, his word, and His command. The selfish greed of Azal and his supporters was defeated and peace and amity prevailed in the Bábí community.

* *Book of Certitude*, p.159-160

Adapted from: *Bahá'u'lláh, A Brief Life: The Word Made Flesh.*

Evil Passions (Selfish Desire, Lust, Anger, Greed, Ego, and Slander)

In addition to teaching us positive values, such as truth, love, compassion, and forgiveness, different religions admonish us against negative traits, such as selfish desire, lust, anger, greed, ego, and slander, as is evident from the following quotes and stories:

“There are three gates to self- destructive hell. These are lust, anger, and greed.” (Hinduism. *Bhagwad Gita*, 16:21)

“In desire is man born, from desire he consumes objects of various tastes. By desire is he led away bound, buffered across the face. Bound by evil qualities he is chastised.” (Sikhism. *Adi Granth*, Sri Raga Ashtpadi M: 1, p. 61)

“What causes wars, and what causes fighting among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire, and do not have; so you kill. And you covet and cannot obtain; so you fight and wage war.” (Christianity. James 4:1,3)

“...a claim and title to territory or native land is but a claim and attachment to the dust of earth. We live upon this earth for a few days and then rest beneath it forever. So it is our

graveyard eternally. Shall man fight for the tomb, which devours him, for his eternal sepulcher? What ignorance could be greater than this? To fight over his grave, to kill another for his grave! What heedlessness! What a delusion!" (Bahá'í, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 355)

"The man who gathers flowers (of sensual pleasure), whose mind is distracted and who is insatiate in desires, the Destroyer brings under his sway. (Buddhism. *Dhammpada* 48) "There is no crime greater than having too many desires: There is no disaster greater than not being content: There is no misfortune greater than being covetous. (Taoism. *Tao Te Chang* 46)

"Have you seen him who makes his desire his god, and God sends him astray purposely, and seals up his hearing and his heart, and sets on his sight a covering? Who will lead him after God (has condemned him)? Will you not then heed? (Islam. *Qur'an*, 45:23)

"When the animal proclivity in man becomes predominant he sinks even lower than the brute. When the heavenly powers are triumphant in his nature, he becomes the noblest and most superior being in the world of creation. All the imperfections found in the animal are found in man. In him there is antagonism, hatred and selfish struggle for existence; in his nature lurk jealousy, revenge, ferocity, cunning, hypocrisy, greed, injustice and tyranny." (Bahá'í, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity*, p.110)

Punishment to god Indira for His Lust

Beside one supreme God, Hindu mythology talks about many gods and goddesses with specific attributes. Among them, god Indira is a very prominent god. He is believed to be in charge of clouds and rains. It is also believed that this god has a very extensive and luxurious court in which many beautiful dancers or fairies keep dancing. In spite of all these luxuries, god Indira's lust is never satisfied. As a result, he is always on the lookout for more and more beautiful girls.

One day, his eyes fell on a very beautiful girl, the wife of a sage named Gautam. Indira started to make plans to seduce her. For this purpose, he started to stalk her husband and notice his habits and his daily routine. He found out that, early in the morning when a rooster crows, the sage wakes up and goes to the nearby river and comes back only after doing his ablution and morning prayers.

Indira decided that this would be his best chance to take advantage of the sage's absence. Therefore, one night he went and hid behind a bush and waited for the crowing of the rooster. As is often the case in such situations, he could not wait till the morning and the rooster's crowing, so he himself emitted a voice like that of a rooster, with the result that the sage Gautam thought it to be the sign of morning, and he proceeded to the river to take his bath and do the morning prayers.

After a few minutes, Indira, disguised as sage Gautam, entered the house. Gautam's wife was surprised by her husband's early return, but being a good simple woman, thought that her husband might have forgotten something, and asked Indira, about it.

“Today I want to make love to you before taking my bath.” Indira said to her in a disguised voice and immediately proceeded to satisfy his sexual desires. In the mean time, sage Gautam guessed there was something wrong. He quickly returned to his house.

When he entered, he found Indira and his wife in a compromising position. He was naturally very much enraged at this horrible crime of god Indira, and cursed him that he would have thousand vulva marks on his body, which would never be erased, and he would live in shame and dishonor forever.

(Adapted from Hindu legends mentioned in Sri Guru Granth Sahib)

Devotee Nam Dev and the Proud Priests

Nam Dev was a poor low caste Hindu who used to feed himself and his family by dyeing and manually printing the clothes of his neighbors. He used to live in a small hut in village Pandarpur in Maharashtra, India. In spite of his poverty and low social status in the society, he so loved God that he used to always remain contented and kept remembering God even while doing his job and other chores.

Once, while on his way to a client's house for an appointment, he happened to pass a nearby Hindu temple where some pundits were doing their ritual worship. Nam Dev felt a strong urge to join them and pay homage to the deity. So he quickly ran towards the temple, entered the main gate, and fervently joined the pundits in reciting the mantras they were chanting.

At first, all other participants were very much impressed by the zeal and devotion of this new worshipper, but then some of the pundits recognized him as the low caste calico printer. Immediately those pundits caught hold of Nam Dev and angrily asked him, how he, a low-caste printer, dared to enter their holy temple.

Nam Dev very humbly tried to explain that, although he was a low caste calico printer, he had a great love and devotion for God, and simply wanted to join them in singing God's praises. The egoistic pundits did not heed any of his pleas and kicked him out of the temple.

Poor Nam Dev went and sat against the back wall of the temple. He was shedding tears and feeling very sad and depressed about this kind of treatment at the hands of the self-conceited pundits. In his mind, he was asking God, why would He allow such an insult of His devotee, which in a way is His own insult? Then, he felt as if God answered him by saying he should not mind this disgrace and he would be rewarded later with salvation.

Nam Dev was not satisfied with this answer. He said to God, this salvation upon death would do no good, as nobody would know about it. Therefore, if God really wanted to restore the honor of His devotee, He should do something right now.

Upon hearing this request, God immediately turned around the entire sanctuary, so that its face was towards Nam Dev and its back towards the egoistic pundits.

When those pundits and others, who had so badly beaten and kicked poor Nam Dev, saw this change they immediately realized their terrible mistake and fell down at the feet of Nam Dev begging for his forgiveness.

(Adapted from a hymn in Sri Guru Granth Sahib)

Four Selfish and Greedy Friends

Once there lived four poor friends in a city. One day they decided to go hiking in a nearby wooded area. While passing through a field, they noticed that the ground near a stone was unusually high and, unlike the surrounding area, without any grass. Their curiosity led them to believe that this place had been recently dug, and filled again, after burying something there.

They started digging the place up, and soon discovered they were right. They found a very big and heavy box, filled with gold coins. They were very thrilled and delighted to find this treasure, and decided they would divide this wealth equally among them.

Since they were very tired from walking so far and digging, and were also hungry, they decided that two of them would go to the city to bring some food and drinks, and the other two would keep sitting there, guarding the treasure.

Soon the evil passions of selfishness, and greed over-powered their feelings of friendship, and honesty. Both parties started thinking about ways to have this treasure all to themselves. The two who were to go to the city and bring food back, decided to eat their food at the shop itself. Then, they laced the food for the other two friends with deadly poison.

On the other hand, the two entrusted with guarding the treasure got their digging tools sharpened and, as soon as the friends with the food came, they attacked them and killed them at the spot.

Then they started to eat the food with relish. Each was thinking, how could he kill the other and have the entire treasure for himself.

They did not know that the food was laced with poison, and both became heaps of dust before the food was even half finished.

Thus, because of their greed and selfishness, all four were not only deprived of their hard found wealth, but their lives as well.

(Adapted from

<http://www.realsikhism.com/index.php?subaction=showfull&id=1193029371&ucat=9>)

Traders of Seriva

Once upon a time, there lived two traveling salesmen in the kingdom of Seriva who used to sell almost similar things. Both of them used to travel together to the same towns but, in order to avoid competing with each other, they used to divide the towns into two almost equal territories for selling their wares. After completing the first round, the merchants would switch their territories, and each one would go and try his luck in the part the other had covered.

One day, they were making their rounds in the city of Andhapura. It so happened that in that city lived an old woman and her granddaughter. Although they belonged to a very rich family, they were living in very poor conditions because of heavy business losses and the sudden deaths of their wage earning family members. One day, when the young child was playing in the street, one of the travelling traders passed through the street hawking his wares and displaying them to interested people. While he was thus showing his wares to a neighbor, this poor little girl was also looking at them. She took a fancy to a small artificial pearl necklace, and ran to her grandmother to get the needed money.

Her grandmother told her that she didn't have any money, but suggested maybe the merchant might agree to accept one of her metal pots or pans in exchange. So she took out one small pot, which, although covered with grease and soot, having not being used for many years was otherwise in good shape, with no kinks, or bends. When she presented this to the merchant he started examining it carefully, removing the soot and grease.

He noticed that this pot was actually made of gold, and was very costly. Instead of offering the fair price for this gold pot, he thought of a clever idea to get it almost free.

“This is an old dirty pot,” he said angrily to the old woman. “It is of no use to me. However, just to please the child, I can give maybe a small candy, or some small trinket, but not this beautiful necklace.”

The little girl just wanted that necklace, so the merchant returned the pot to the old lady and proceeded further on his round. He thought that in the evening he would come back, and by then the old lady and the little girl would become agreeable to exchange that pot for a small trinket.

After completing their respective rounds, the merchants switched their routes. When the other merchant passed through the same street in which the poor old lady and her granddaughter lived, he was also presented with that pot. So he scraped off some of the dust and the soot from the pot, and soon determined that the pot was actually made of solid gold.

“Oh, madam,” he said to the old lady. “This pot is quite costly, maybe \$1000, because it is made of pure gold. But I can pay you only \$500, plus the beautiful pearl necklace your granddaughter wants.”

After some hesitation, the old lady accepted the offer, because she knew that it was very difficult for her to go to the city and find an honest jeweler. Soon after that the other merchant also came to try to get the pot, but was very disappointed when he found that the other merchant had already bought it for half the price. Now he could not do anything except to repent for his greed.

(Adapted from

<http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/kawasaki/bl135.html#jat003>)

How Much Land Does a Man Need?

Once, in a village in Punjab, India, there lived a farmer, named Bahadur Singh. He had inherited a small one acre piece of land from his father. He was a hard working young man and was living a happy contented life on the income derived from the food grains and vegetables which he would grow every year on his land. In fact, after a few years he was able to save enough money and could afford to marry a young beautiful girl from a neighboring village.

A few years later, this couple gave birth to three children and started to feel that the land they had was not enough for feeding and educating their children. They started to work harder and tried to save as much money as they could. One day they were able to buy an additional half acre of land from their neighbor. They thought that this would provide enough income for them to adequately take care of and educate their children.

Unluckily, due to two or three consecutive years of drought, even their expanded farm was not sufficient to provide enough income for their family. Moreover, due to growth in population and accelerated urbanization, the land prices suddenly increased at an alarming rate. They could not afford to buy any additional land with their meager savings.

Therefore, Bahadur Singh started enquiring about other possibilities in the country. To his surprise, he found out that far off in the state of Assam, land was being sold by some *Adivassies* (aboriginals), at dirt-cheap rates. Many of his acquaintances had gone there, and bought

big chunks of fertile land at very nominal prices. They were now living happily there. Bahadur Singh also decided to go and try his luck there.

After many days of tiring journey by train, bus, horse buggy, and walking, he reached the headquarters of the *Adivassies*, and met their chief. He enquired if more land was available for sale, and what was the rate per acre. The chief told Bahadur Singh, that he had much more land to sell, but as for the rate per acre, they don't know any such thing. What they did was that they go to the starting point of their land, the buyer deposits a fixed some of money, and as soon as the sun rises, he starts marking the boundary of his land with any sharp tool, and tries to encircle as much land as he can. But, the buyer has to return to the starting point before the sun sets. If he reaches before sunset, all the land marked by him becomes his. If he does not reach the starting point before sunset, he does not get any land and loses all his deposit.

Bahadur Singh accepted these terms. The next day, before sunrise, accompanied by the *Adivassies* and their chief, he went to the starting point. He quickly looked over the available land and felt very happy that it was truly very fertile land. He felt he could easily cover a big area in the duration of the day. He immediately deposited the required sum of money with the chief and waited impatiently for the sun to rise.

As soon as he saw the first ray of sun, and got a nod from the chief, Bahadur Singh proceeded on his task of marking the land, walking swiftly to the next point. He soon found out that as he proceeded farther and farther, the land appeared more and more productive and fertile, so he kept on enlarging his boundary wider and wider. In this way, he covered a very vast area, but when he looked at the sun, he noticed that the day was almost three-fourths gone, and it was already afternoon.

He started walking and marking very fast, going towards the starting point. However on the way, he would suddenly come across some extraordinary fertile areas of land, which his greed won't let him pass without marking. The result was that when he once again looked at the sky, he noticed that the sun was about to set in a few minutes. He immediately girded his loins and started running as fast as he could while dragging his marking tool behind him.

As he came near the starting point, he noticed that the *Adivassies* were cheering him for being such a strong person, and covering so much land in one day. No one had marked so much land before in one day. But, as for Bahadur Singh, his lips were absolutely dry, his heart was throbbing at a very high rate, and he was feeling excruciating pain in his chest. Still, ignoring all these discomforts, Bahadur Singh, made a last ditch effort and, before the last ray of the sun could disappear, he fell down on the ground, extended his hand, and touched the starting peg.

At this, all the *Adivassies* started making a great deal more joyous noise. Their chief bent over Bahadur Singh to help him sit up. To his surprise, the chief noticed that foam was coming out from his mouth, and his body was lifeless. All the *Adivassies* tried to revive him as best as they could, but ultimately gave up, and started digging a pit, only about two yards long, and about half a yard wide. This was, ultimately, all the land Bahadur Singh needed.

(Adapted from a story read by the author in his high school, which was adapted from a Russian story).

The Boy Who Could Not Control His Anger

Once there was a boy named Ahmed who was the only son of his parents. Being the only child he was very dear to his parents. He was overall a very good boy, being tidy, and good in his studies, but he had one major problem. He had a very terrible temper. He would start shouting and cursing at the smallest excuse, and would not even care whether he was shouting at younger children or his elders and teachers. Naturally, this made him very unpopular with his acquaintances and fellow students who nick-named him Mr. Anger. His parents advised him many times to control his temper, but he would reply that in spite of his best intentions, he was finding it impossible to control his anger. Whenever anybody annoyed him he would fly into a rage and, before he could realize his mistake, he might have already shouted many curses, or tried to physically harm the other person.

Ultimately his father came up with a plan. He gave the boy a big bag of nails, and told him that next time he felt so provoked or angry that he could not resist shouting or kicking, he should take one nail out of this bag and drive it as hard and as deep as he felt angry into a post in the fence in their backyard. He was to report back to his father after a couple of weeks.

The boy agreed. Whenever he felt annoyed or mad at any person or a thing, he would go to that post in the fence and would drive a nail in it. At first the boy got agitated so many times in a day that he would

end up pounding in almost two dozen nails a day. Eventually the boy started feeling exhausted and tired of driving these nails, so he started keeping control of his temper, and the number of nails driven in the fence started decreasing.

After a couple of weeks he noted that he had not driven even a single nail for many days. He went back to his father and told him about his progress.

The father told him to take out as many nails as he could easily take out. The boy did exactly that. Then the father accompanied the boy to the post, and saw some nails still in the post that he could not get out.

“Look, Ahmed,” the father said. “You see that even though you have taken out many nails, there are some which are still stuck in this post, and there are many holes and scratches in the post where you removed the nails. Similarly, angry and harsh words shouted at somebody are like driving nails into the hearts of that person. Just as you could take out some nails, but they still left holes in the wood, similarly there are some words, which you can retract and apologize for, and the person concerned may even accept your apology, but still the bad memory of those harsh words won’t go away. But, like the nails, which you could not take out, there are some words and curses which go so deep in a victim’s mind that, no matter what apology you may offer, the injured person is not able to forget and forgive. He or she may try to harm you, or at the least, you may lose his or her friendship for good. Next time you feel provoked or annoyed, remember to control your temper, and do not utter any harsh words lest you have to repent for the rest of your life.”

(Adapted from

<http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/anger.management.stories.in.islam.asp>

The King Who Was Proud of His Generosity

Once upon a time, there was a king who was so generous that he became too proud of his generosity. He would boast that no matter when and where anybody approached him and asked for any donation, he or she would not go away empty handed. But once on a hunting trip, the king was with his horse in a jungle, when a hungry saint visited him. The saint pleaded for a donation from the king to which the king replied that he has nothing to offer the saint in a jungle.

“Oh, bountiful king,” the saint insisted. “You always claim that no matter when and where, anybody asks you for any donation or charity, he or she never returns empty handed. Please give me whatever you can.”

Out of his misguided pride and ego, the king put a handful of horse dung in the saint’s platter. The saint accepted it, blessed him and walked away quietly.

Several years later, the king returned to the same jungle on another hunting excursion. To his astonishment, he noticed heaps of horse dung all over. He started to wonder how all that horse dung got there when there were no horses or stables around. He then noticed a small hut where the same saint whom he had met a few years ago was meditating. After salutations to the saint, the king enquired about the horse dung.

“O mighty king,” the saint replied. “If you would recall, I visited you some years ago asking for a donation and you gave me a handful of

horse dung in offering. This is your offering that has multiplied. Some day you will have to eat it all.”

The king was taken aback by the saint’s reply. In all humility, with grave repentance and melancholy, he prayed to the saint and asked for redemption and a solution to end the heaps of horse dung.

“If all people in your kingdom vilify you or condemn you,” the saint replied. “Then this dung will disappear or else you will have to eat it all.”

Upon returning to his kingdom, the king started abusing and torturing people. He started roaming drunk and uttering curses. Such behavior eventually led to his defamation. He again returned to the saint and noticed that all the dung was gone except for the amount he had originally offered to the saint. The king pleaded to the saint for settlement of that also.

“There is one godly woman in your kingdom.” The saint replied. “Who has not spoken against you.”

The king went to her door and cursed her to provoke her to utter some bad words in response. Opening the door, the woman boldly confronted the king and told him upfront that she is not the one who is going to eat his share of the dung.

Heartbroken with repentance and realization the king returned to the saint and again confessed and apologized for his wrongdoing. However, the saint again told the king, that he could not do anything. So the king had to eat his share of dung, and learnt the lesson that no matter what, one should never be too proud of oneself on any account and should never vilify others.

(Contributed by Dr. Amarjit Singh, M.D, Rochester, MN.)

The Sage, the Deer, and the Hunter

Once a holy man was going to see God. On his way through the jungle he first met a sage and told him that he is going to see God, and asked him if he had any question, which he wanted to ask God. With a great pride and arrogance, the sage asked him to convey this message to God that he has been sitting at this one place doing penance and worship for the last twenty years. He knows that God has previously given seats in heaven even to those devotees, who have worshipped Him for only a few months. But, he has been worshipping Him and doing hard penance for many years, so he would like to know what special seat or place God has reserved for him in the heaven. The man said he would convey his message to God, and would tell him God's response on his way back.

Next the man happened to meet a hunter who was trying to shoot some birds with his bow and arrow. He asked the hunter the same question.

"Oh, holy man," the hunter humbly replied. "What kind of question a sinner like me could ask God. But if you can do this favor to me, tell God that I know that I am a sinner. I kill poor birds, sell their meat, and thus feed my children. I know this is a sin, but I don't know any other way to provide for my family. I know that, for a sinner like me, heaven is out of question, but ask God if there would be any place in hell for me?"

Hearing this reply, the man told the hunter that he would convey his message to God, and would tell him God's answer on his way back.

Next, the holy person met a deer, and asked it the same question he had asked the sage and the hunter.

“Oh, holy man,” the deer replied. “If you must, then tell God that in this area where I live there has been no rain for the last twelve years. The result is that most of the rivers, lakes, and ponds have gone dry, and I have to go to far off and dangerous places in search of a few drops of water to drink. Many days I have to remain thirsty and hungry. So please ask Him, when might the rain come?”

The holy man assured the deer that he would definitely convey its message to God, and would tell on his return, what God had to say in this regard. Then he proceeded further on his way.

After a few days the man returned to that jungle and first went to meet the sage.

“Yes, tell me,” the sage haughtily addressed the holy man. “What special kind of glorious heaven has God prepared for me?”

“Oh, dear sage,” the holy man replied. “I am sorry to say, that hearing your message, instead of becoming happy, God became very angry, and said that, no matter how long any person has worshipped Him, or what kind of penance anybody has done, He doesn't like any egoistic or arrogant person. Instead of any special heaven, He is not going to give him any place even in hell. He was going to send him to a place which is many times hotter, and much more torturous, than hell.”

After conveying this response the holy man proceeded further on his return journey, and met the bird hunter.

The hunter again humbly asked him, about God's response.

“Oh, hunter,” the holy man said. “Upon hearing your tale, God said, that no doubt the hunter is committing grave sins by killing poor small birds, but He is always sympathetic to those, who humbly acknowledge their guilt, and are willing to make amends in the future. Therefore, go and tell the hunter that he can still catch the birds, but instead of killing them for meat, he should sell them as house pets. If he follows this advice all his previous sins would be pardoned and he would be favorably considered for a place in heaven.”

Hearing this response, the hunter was very pleased and profusely thanked God for such a wonderful advice, which would not only save

him from further sins, but could bring him much more income because he could sell each bird as a pet at a much higher price than a few ounces of its meat.

Finally, with great reluctance, the holy man went to see the deer.

“Oh, deer,” said the holy man. “I don’t have very good news for you. I don’t know in what mood God was in when I conveyed your message to Him.”

“Go and tell that deer,” God curtly replied, “That if it has not rained for the last twelve years, it won’t rain for the next twelve years.”

“Before I could plead any more on your behalf, He waved His Hand, signaling that He didn’t want to be disturbed any further. So I am sorry, I don’t have any good news for you.”

Hearing this reply, instead of feeling dejected or disappointed, the deer started jumping in joy, and making merry. Watching this strange behavior, the holy man was totally amazed.

“I am really puzzled by your strange behavior,” he said to the deer. “I feeling so sorry for you, that you would have to live without rain for another twelve years, but you are jumping in joy, as if I have brought you such good news that you cannot restrain from dancing.”

“Oh, my dear holy man,” said the deer. “You need to look on the bright side of this news. If God said that there would be no rain for another twelve years, it did not mean that it would never rain, it only meant that it would rain after twelve years. If I have survived for twelve years without rain, I can certainly survive another twelve years. Is not that a good news?” Saying this, the deer resumed its dancing and merry making.

Upon watching this positive attitude of the deer, cheerfully obeying and accepting God’s will, God was so pleased that He immediately ordered such a real heavy rain on the area that all its streams, lakes, and ponds remained full with water for many years to come, and all the birds, and animals of the jungle, including the deer, lived happily ever after.

(Based on a story told to the author, by his mother)

Evil Doesn't Go Unpunished

It is said that once upon a time, there lived two weavers in a small village. One of them was a very honest hard working and God worshipping man, who always used to weave beautiful bed sheets and carpets with the best kind of cotton thread he could find. He used to charge his customers a very fair price irrespective of their age or social status. He would daily go to worship and light small clay lamps in the village temple, which was dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva.

The other man however, was the exact opposite. He was a most dishonest person, and would not miss any opportunity to cheat his customers and sell them lower quality carpets at high prices. He didn't believe in any god either. Instead of worshipping, or lighting lamps in the temple, he used to stealthily follow the good man to the temple. As soon as the good man left the temple, he would throw stones at the lamps to break and extinguish them.

This man had mastered the art of marketing. Since most of the customers for the bed sheets and carpets used to come from the nearby cities, he would choose very suitable locations near the bus stop or the railway station and display his good quality sheets and carpets on a high pedestal. Then he would pass on the lower quality wares to the unwitting customers.

However, the honest weaver did not know any such tactics. He would simply wait in his house for the local customers to come and buy what they needed. In a short time the dishonest weaver became quite rich and affluent, and the honest weaver was barely able to survive. But

still, he did not leave his honesty and faith in God, and kept going to the temple regularly, worshiping and lighting the lamps.

One day it so happened that a very heavy hail and thunder storm, accompanied by a very high velocity wind, raged in the village. Since the poor honest man did not have any good umbrella, his wife convinced him to skip going to the temple for this day, and do his worship and light the lamp at his home, keeping god Shiva in mind.

The dishonest weaver thought that the good man would never miss going to the temple and lighting the lamps, therefore he must go and break the lamps. However, when he went to the temple he saw no light coming from it so he entered thinking that the good man must have placed his lamps in some secure, covered place. While he was searching for the lighted lamps, god Shiva was awakened. In his simplicity he thought that this man was a true devotee of his who had come to worship him even in this terrible weather.

“Oh, my devotee,” said Shiva in his divine voice. “I have been very pleased by your steadfast devotion and worship even in such difficult circumstances, so ask for any boon you want.”

Since this man was a weaver, he immediately asked for a boon of one hundred hands, so that he could make many bed sheets and carpets at the same time. God Shiva immediately granted this wish of his, and he started happily towards his home with one hundred hands dang-ling from his body.

By this time, the storm had passed and the villagers came out of their houses. They were walking towards the temple and assessing the damage on the way. From a distance, they saw this strange creature walking towards them with so many hands dangling from its body. Since they had never seen such a creature before, they thought that it was some dragon with an evil spirit who was responsible for this terrible storm and great damage to the village. Therefore, lest this creature did more harm, they immediately started hitting it with stones and killed him on the spot.

It is said that the man was hit by as many stones as he had thrown at the lighted lamps and thus ultimately, he had to pay for all his evil deeds.

(Adapted from a story heard from my Hindi teacher in high school)

Conclusion

I hope these quotes and stories from different religions and traditions would be enough to convince the readers that, even though religions may be different and diverse, in many respects, yet they all teach us to practice some basic good values and virtues, such as truth, honesty, love, compassion, and kindness, and avoid some obvious sins and evils, such as lust, anger, greed, ego, and slander. This is the unity in the diversity of different religions.

