

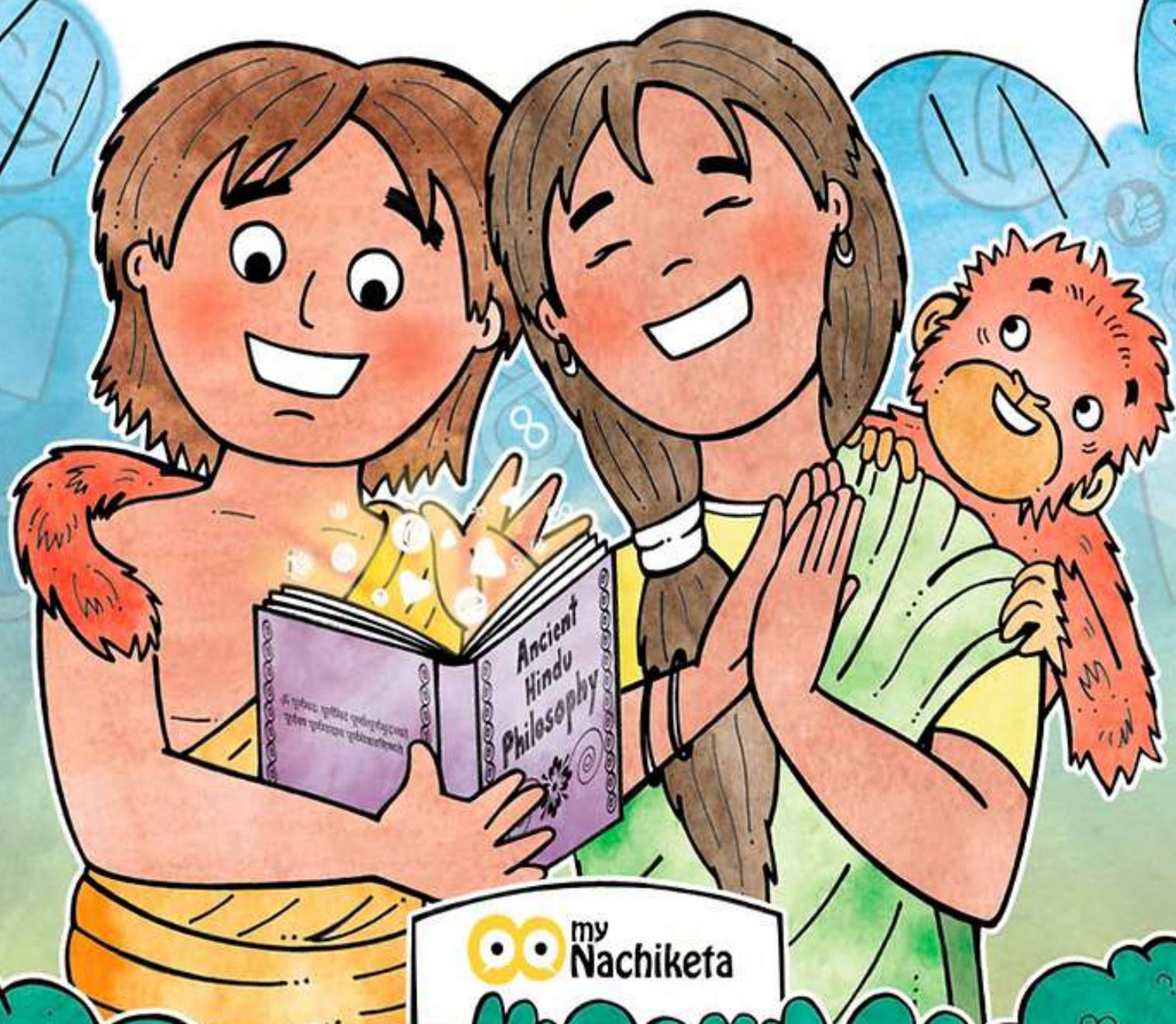
Hindu Philosophy for Children Series

LEVEL 1 - GRADE IV AND ABOVE

DISCOVERING GOD

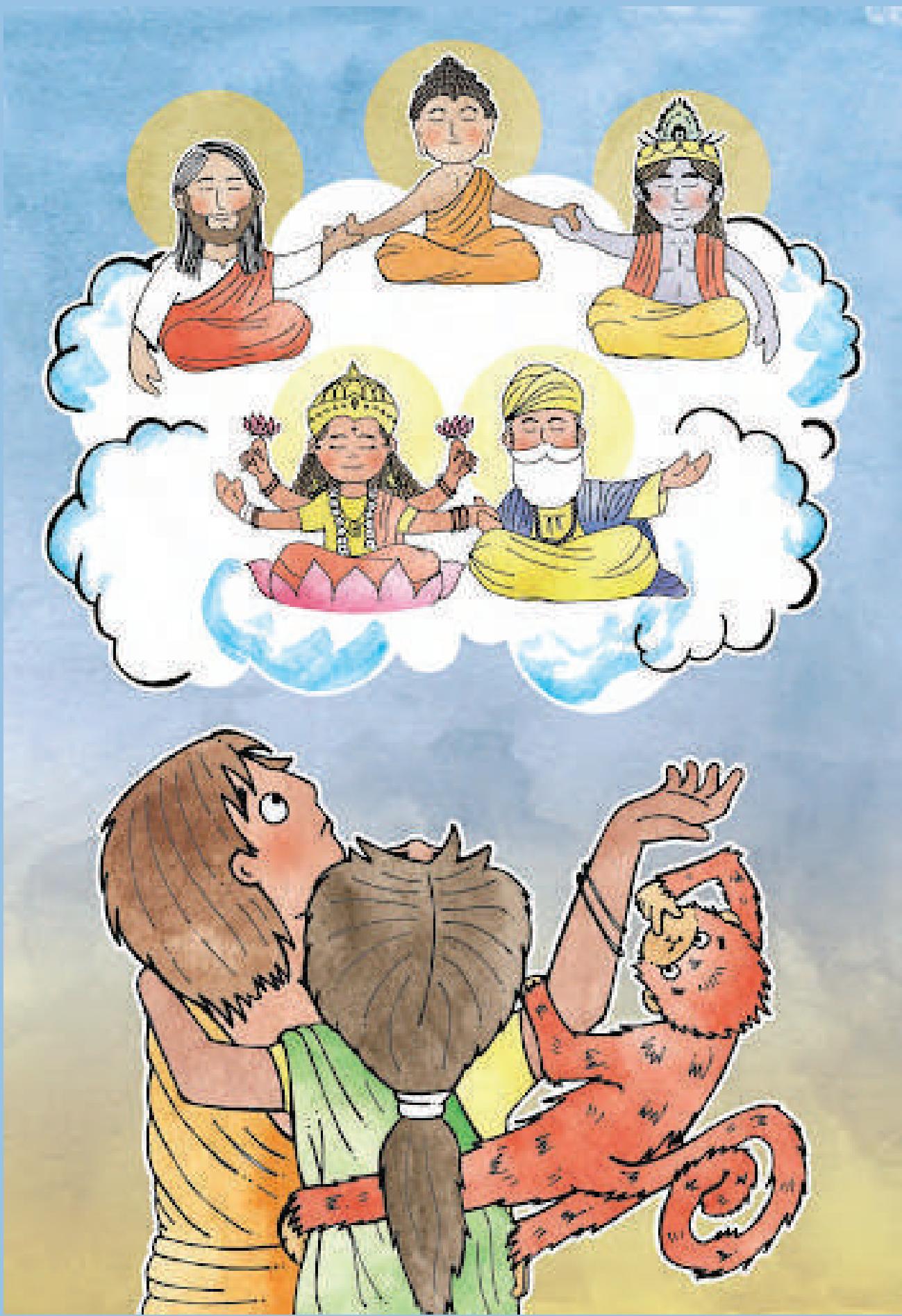
Learn * Discuss * Debate

WE BRING THE WISDOM OF GITA AND UPANISHADS TO CHILDREN



my
Nachiketa

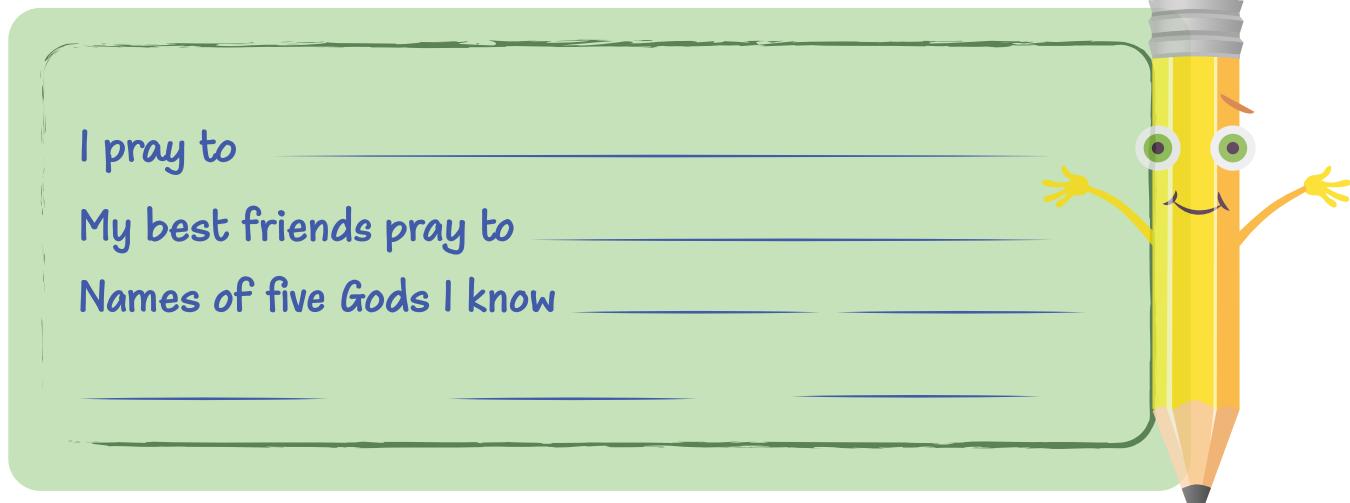
CHAPTER 1



1. WHO ARE THE GODS ?

To which God do you pray? Do you pray to one God or many Gods? Do your friends pray to a different God? Are there many Gods? Hmm. Who is the greatest God?

Write Here:



Many of us pray to God. Some of us pray in the morning. Others do it before eating food. Many of us pray at night. Some remember God before doing something important, like taking an exam. We call out to God in different ways:

Hare Krishna

Jai Mata di

Wahe Guru

Har har Gange



How do you
call out to God



There are many Gods. We often have our own favorite. The Gods are very different from each other.

One of the Gods is Shivji, who does not live in a house but on a mountain called Kailash Parbat (कैलाश पर्वत). Shivji was never born and will never die. Then we have Hanumanjee, who is not a human but a vaanar (वानर). Hanumanjee is a courageous devotee* of Bhagwaan Ram. And Mata Saraswati is the Goddess of Learning.

Other religions beyond Hinduism also have Gods. Christians believe in Jesus Christ, who was born in the city of Bethlehem. He taught everyone to love their neighbour. Buddhists revere Buddha, Jains wish to be like Mahavira, Sikhs believe in Guru Nanak, and Muslims pray to Allah.

Vaanar: A Sanskrit word which means a monkey with human like qualities.

Devotee: A person who strongly believes in something. For example, if your favorite God is Lakshmiji, then you are a devotee of Lakshmiji.

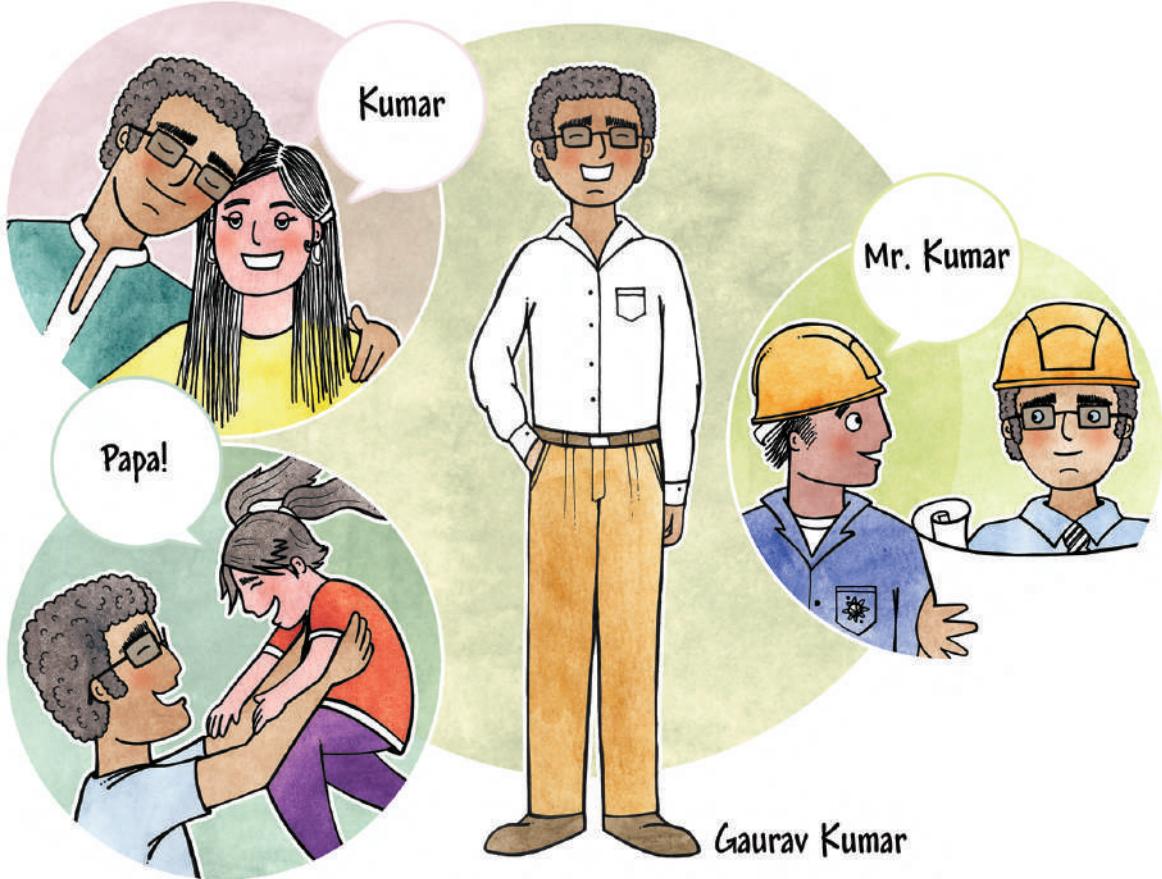
Are all these Gods real? Is one stronger than the others? What is the relationship between them?

Hindu philosophers have thought about these questions for a long time. They concluded* that all these Gods exist and are real. These are all different forms of the same God.

Think of it this way. When your parents are at home, they wear certain kinds of clothes and behave in a certain way. When they are at work, they dress and behave differently. When they take you to a park or a restaurant, they wear another kind of clothes and do a different set of activities. They behave in various different ways with you, their friends, and with their own parents.

Let us look at an example. Gaurav Kumar lives with his wife and daughter in Delhi. He works in a technology company. His daughter calls him 'Papa' and sees him as her father. Gaurav shows fatherly love towards his daughter. His daughter obeys him. His wife sees him as her husband. Gaurav respects her and she respects him.

Concluded: To decide after thinking about a topic.



The same person behaves differently with different people.

Gaurav behaves in a different way with each of these people. He takes a different role with his daughter, a different role with his wife, and a different role with his fellow workers. All these people see Gaurav differently. Yet, Gaurav is the same ONE person.

It is the same with God who takes different forms with different people. God behaves differently with each of them. Different people call God by different names. They also behave in various different ways with God.



When we were kids, we used to tell a joke about the many Gods. A person called Geet was on a ship and the ship started sinking. Geet started calling out to the Gods. Geet first called out to Krishna. He then called out to Ram, then Hanuman, and finally Durga Mata. The ship sank, and Geet sank with it.

| After reaching heaven, Geet asked God, "Why wasn't I saved?"

| Geet had called out to so many Gods!

| The reply was that because Geet had kept calling out to various forms, God had been busy changing from one to the other: Krishna in yellow clothes holding a flute, Rama with a bow and arrow, and Hanuman as a vaanar. Before God could leave to help, Geet had called out to Durga Mata. So busy changing forms, God could

| It is not a great joke but has a simple and important lesson. There is one God behind the many forms!



We have another way to think about this. Let me tell you a story that is over 2000 years old. There was once a village with only blind people. An elephant came to the village. The blind people heard the elephant come but couldn't obviously see it.

All the blind people wanted to know which creature had come to their village. They surrounded the elephant and started touching it.

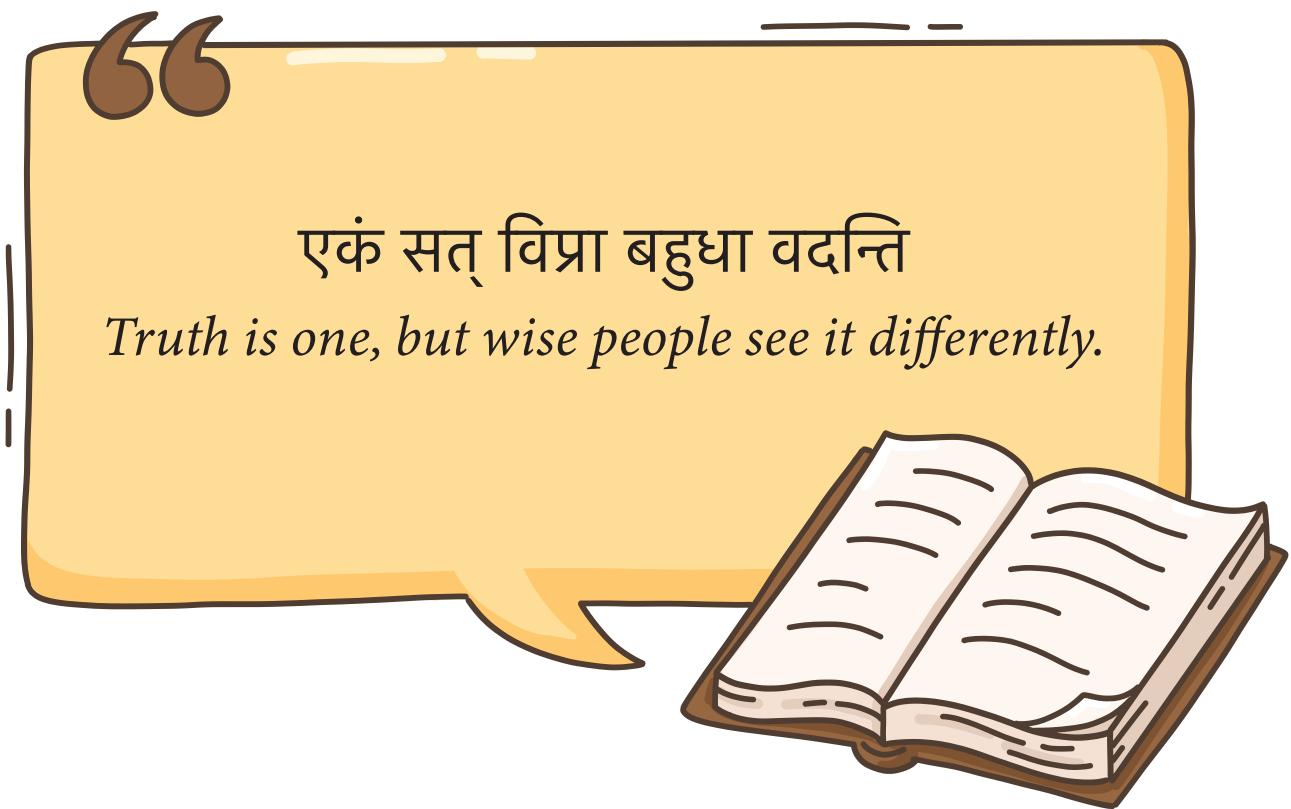
One grabbed the trunk and described the creature to be a pipe. Another grabbed one of its feet and described the elephant as a pillar. Yet another touched the tummy and said the creature was a wall. The one who got hold of its tail said the creature was a rope. And the one who felt the large ears said it was a fan. There are some blanks for you to write what the children might be imagining!



See the blindfolded children touching an elephant.

That elephant was one, but different people imagined it differently. The same is true for God. We are all like blind people because we understand and know God to some extent* but not completely. We all see the same one God differently.

This idea is nicely summed up in a very old shloka* (श्लोक) :



Some extent: Not fully

Shloka: A short sanskrit poem.



The shloka above comes from Rigveda, which is one of the primary Vedas. The Vedas (वेद) were the first books of Hindus written some 3000-4000 years ago. The word ‘Veda’ means knowledge or wisdom—Vedas are books of knowledge. It is believed the Vedas were organized by Ved Vyasa.

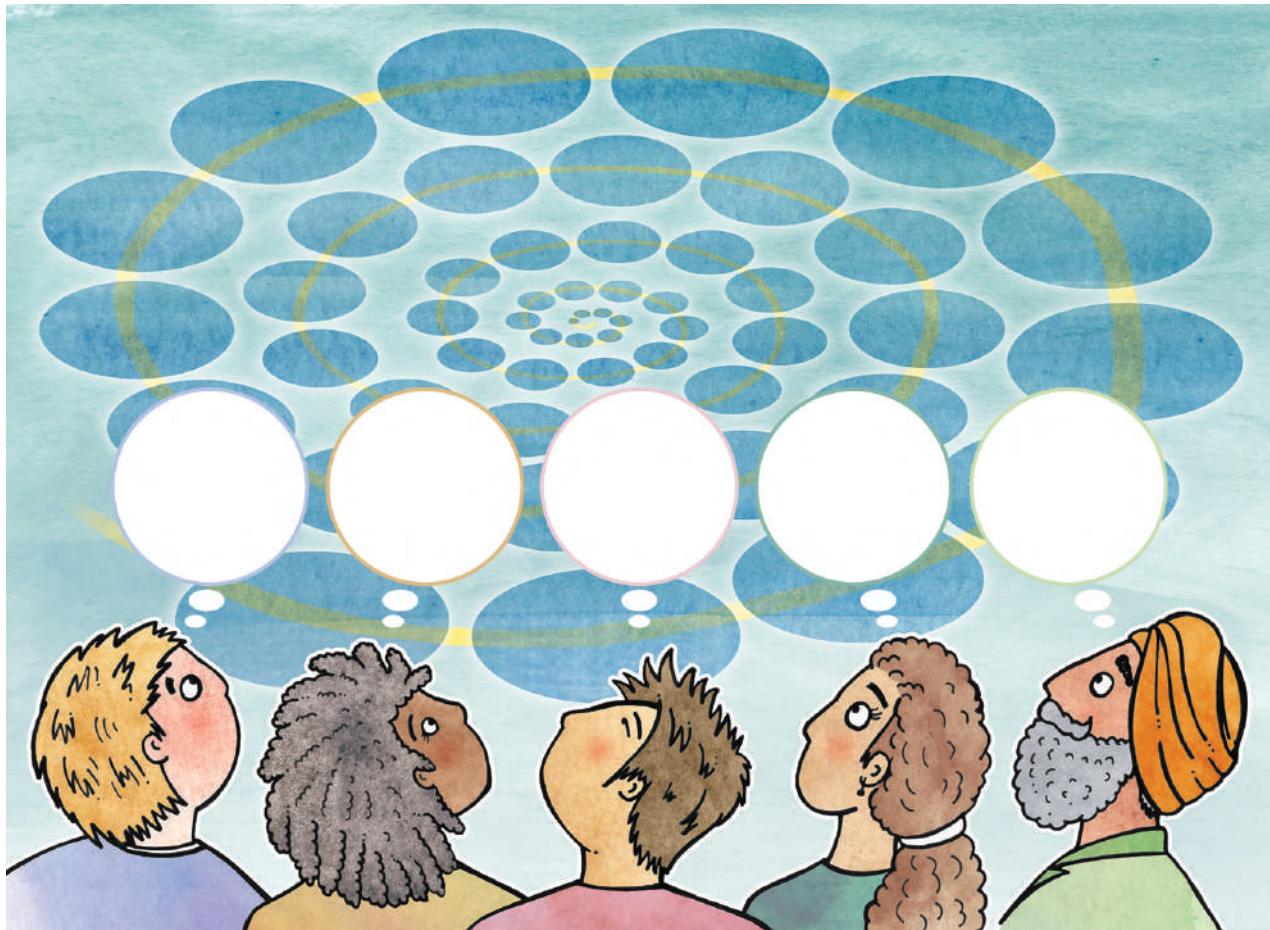
There are four primary Vedas: Saamveda (सामवेद), Yajurveda (यजुर्वेद), Atharvaveda (अथर्ववेद) and Rigveda (ऋग्वेद). The Vedas contain descriptions of rituals and mantras (ways to worship or invoke God) and hymns (songs in praise of God). They tell stories of Gods, kings, and sages. Rigveda is the oldest of the Vedas.

Upanishads (उपनिषद्) are another set of chapters in the Vedas. Many consider Upanishads as the final part of the Vedas. Therefore, the content of the Upanishads is also called as ‘Vedanta’ (वेदान्त) (वेद + अंत [end]). There are around 108 total Upanishads. Out of these, 12 Upanishads are considered the main Upanishads. Each Upanishad is associated with one of the Vedas.

The word ‘Upanishad’ means ‘sitting by near’: sitting near a guru and getting knowledge from the guru. Upanishads are mainly philosophical texts or books—they discuss various questions like who is God, who are we, and what is the world?

Upanishads also have some interesting stories, such as that of a child named Nachiketa (नचिकेत). Nachiketa is really interested in learning more about the world, God, and the self. A lot of what we will learn in this book comes from the Upanishads.





Different people see the same one God differently.

All the Gods are true and real, say the Hindu philosophers. We can love the one we like and pray to that God. If you like Deviji, you pray to her. Or if you like Krishnaji, you can pray to him.

Why do we have so many Gods?

We gave you two different views of the philosophers:

1. God takes various forms, and we can choose the one we like.
2. We all see God differently, because none of us understand God completely.

You can choose whichever of these ideas you like. Both point to the same truth that there is ONE God.

We have now learned about the idea that there is One God. We have still not answered who is that one God? We will discuss that in the second chapter.

Excercise

- 1.** After reading this chapter, you might be confused about some things or may not agree with some things. Write two such things. Discuss them with your friends and search about them on the internet.

- 2.** Select True or False
 - a) God takes many different forms.
 - b) Male Gods are superior to female Gods.
 - c) Hindu Gods are real, while Gods of other religions are not real
 - d) In the story, blind people were touching different animals.
 - e) All Gods are real and true.
 - f) Shivji is stronger than Hanumanjee.

- 3.** Learn about two new Gods – one male and one female. The God can be from Hinduism or another religion. Write 5 sentences describing each of these Gods. Discuss anything you found strange or surprising about these Gods.



- 4.** Did you know there are Gods who are neither male or female? There are also Gods who are both male and female. Explore!
- 5.** Is there a purpose to having many Gods? Is having many Gods good or bad for the world? Write your views on the topic.
- 6.** We said all Gods are forms of the same one God. Are some forms of God higher or lower, stronger or weaker? Think about it and share your views. If yes, give examples of higher and lower Gods. Tell why you think one of them is higher than the other.
- 7.** For FUN: Draw a picture or write a poem that shows all Gods are ONE. Post it on the internet and also send it to us!



Do you, children and parents, wonder

Are all different Gods true?

What is the relation between God and us?

Do we have control of our lives?

Where is God? How can we find God?



If so, then, this book is for you !

But we shall not give the answers. We will give you a way of thinking about these questions, inspired by the thoughts of philosophers, to let you find your own answers.

The aim of the book is to encourage to children to ask questions, discuss and debate these topics in a constructive manner.

Note for parents and teachers:

Children today know a lot about stories of Gods. However, they do not know much about the philosophical traditions of Hinduism. This is the first level of the book and a gentle introduction to Hindu philosophy. It doesn't subscribe to one school, but intends to take the common elements of different mainstream schools of Hindu philosophy. Where we find contradictions, we defer to Vedanta, which we believe is the most influential philosophy among Hindus today. The book is reviewed by academic experts and those in spiritual traditions.

ISBN: 978-93-5607-417-0

9 789356 074170



books@mynachiketa.com



@mynachiketa

MRP: INR XX

(inclusive of all taxes)