

The Story of Prahlad

For the teacher

- This story reminds Hindus of the rewards of loyalty and devotion to God and how faith can overcome evil.
- It is often told at the Hindu festival of Holi, when bonfires are lit and roasting grains (called Holuk), pop corn, coconut and chick peas are thrown on by Hindu families.

Once upon a time there was an evil king called Hiranyakashipu (which means "dressed in gold") who demanded that everyone should worship him as a god. He thought of himself as the 'Lord of the universe', but his son Prahlad would only worship the great God Vishnu. The king tried to force his son to bow down to him, but Prahlad refused.

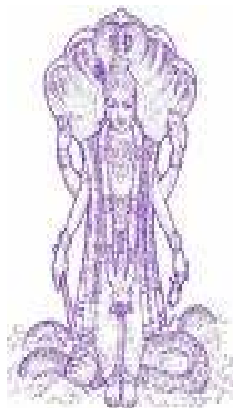
The king ordered his army to kill his son, but Prahlad called on the great god Vishnu and the soldiers lost their strength. Then the king had him thrown into a pit of poisonous snakes, but again Prahlad called on Vishnu and survived. The king tried many ways to kill the boy, but every time Prahlad called on Vishnu and was saved.

In the end, the evil king called on his sister Holika to carry Prahlad into the flames of a bonfire. She had been promised that she had a gift from the gods that would save her from being burnt. The evil Holika cackled with laughter as the flames began to rise around her and Prahlad. But again he called 'Vishnu, Vishnu!' and the power of the Vishnu was so great that Prahlad was protected while Holika was burned.

Hours later, the king came to watch the dying fire. No courtier dared to warn him what he would find. There on the mound of ash sat Prahlad. 'God saved me', said Prahlad, simply. 'I'm sick of your God', said the King. 'Where is this God, then? See if he'll save you from me.' The king drew his sword.

'God is everywhere,' said Prahlad. 'He is in the fire, in water, in the wind and the grass, even in that stone column behind you.'

With that the column broke in two. Out came God but his shape was strange. The upper part of his body was that of a lion, the lower that of a man. He was neither man nor animal. He lifted the king, carried him to the palace door and placed him on his lap. Then he killed him with a single swipe of his great claws. Vishnu made Prahlad the king and he ruled wisely and well ever after.



Vishnu

Activities for pupils

Good use of the stories will develop pupils' understanding by getting them to work with the story, rather than simply retell it. Two activities for doing this are provided here.

- Use this story of Prahlad with the target board diagram and ask pupils to work (in pairs) to show their understanding of what matters most to Prahlad. One statement only goes in the centre, no more than two in each of the other circles. This activity requires pupils to reflect, evaluate and justify their ideas. It provides opportunities for pupils to show achievement at level three of the QCA scale of expectations.
- By asking children to reflect on what some Hindu children have said about God and matching these to the experiences of Prahlad in the story, pupils should be able to identify and talk about some key Hindu beliefs about God.

Obeying his father

Becoming king

Living in a palace

Trusting Vishnu

Being admired by other people

Believing that God was in everything and everyone

Living dangerously

Standing up for what was right

Praying

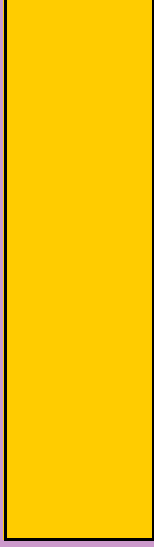
Being good

DOESN'T SEEM TO MATTER MUCH

MATTERS A BIT

MATTERS VERY MUCH

MATTERS MOST



Activities for pupils

1. What might a young Hindu learn from this story?

- On the sheet there are a series of statements Hindu children your age have said about God.
- In pairs talk about how these match up to the beliefs and experiences of Prahlad in the story.
- Make a list of adjectives to describe God that fit with both the story and the children's ideas.
- Write your own statement about what you think or believe about God. You can add your own statement to the website for others to read:

www.pcfre.org.uk/db/primary.php

What some young Hindus say about God:

God is around to protect us.

Hindu girl aged 9

I believe that you should obey God and never disobey him. You should always try and follow God.

Hindu boy aged 8

I believe in God because he or she gives us things we need.

Hindu boy aged 9

I think God warns you and helps you. God is all around you and he will always be there for you.

Hindu girl aged 10

I think God is a loving person no matter the bad things he makes happen because he does it for their own good. I also think God is more powerful than all of us.

Hindu girl aged 10

I believe that wherever you go he is always there looking after us.

Hindu girl aged 11

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