

***Teacher's Guide***

*To*

***The Forbidden Temple***

*Tulika Publishers, 2004*

[www.tulikabooks.com/factandfiction.htm](http://www.tulikabooks.com/factandfiction.htm)

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## Why a teacher's guide?

Since the publication of *The Forbidden Temple*, many teachers have contacted me with an interest in using the book to supplement Social studies/History and Language/English textbooks. This guide is a compilation of ideas that could be developed into lesson plans in both subjects. Plans in the language arts sometimes explore reading comprehension and sometimes provide suggestions for essay composition. Plans in Social studies generally focus on history, sometimes linking the past with the present (civics/politics), or suggesting topics for further research. I also present some ideas for cross-curricular extensions, providing suggestions to begin discussions on deeper issues. I have tried to make my ideas broad enough that they may be adapted for use in Indian, American and British classrooms. For each story, I have listed 3 sections: (i) suggestions for English lesson plans, (ii) history lesson plans and activities (iii) cross-curricular activities.

I have often suggested that the entire class participate in a particular activity. If the large size of a class precludes this possibility, then the activities could be conducted by requesting children to volunteer, or randomly calling upon a few children to demonstrate what they have done to the class (while involving the entire class in the activity). The chapter headings in this guide correspond to the chapter titles in the book.

If the book is used to supplement a history text, please be sure to point out and remind your students of the difference between history and historical fiction. Ensure that the students are clear that the stories in the book are based on, but not necessarily, fact. You could always have the children try to separate the “fact” and “fiction” elements within some or all of the stories.

I welcome other suggestions and comments. If you have an idea that you would like to contribute, please email it to me and I would be delighted to consider adding it to this website (with an acknowledgement and by-line as requested and as appropriate). If you would like to write to me, please contact me through my website (address on page 1).

I'd like to end this note with a plea to all teachers to remember that first and foremost, every story was written to be read, rather than analyzed. Allow your students to relish their reading before you begin any lesson and do make sure that your activities enhance the child's experience and enjoyment of the book. Thank you!

### ***Contents***

- The Hunt pg. 3-4
- Footloose in the City pg. 5-6
- A Question of Belonging pg. 7-8
- To Follow a Dream pg. 9-10
- A Westward Journey pg. 11-12
- The Storm pg. 13-14
- The Forbidden Temple. Pg. 15-16
- Boat Song pg. 17-18
- For Love of a Game pg. 19-20
- Checkmate pg. 21-22
- Some additional background information pg. 23 - 36

## The Hunt (English)

What's in a name?

### Comprehension and Composition

Learning objective:

1. The student will use critical thinking skills to understand the reasons behind the choice of names in fiction.

Plan ideas:

In the first story, I used the expression “the boy” to avoid naming the protagonist. I did not want to invent a name, and we have no records of names that may have been used during the Stone Age. Explore this aspect of the story, by asking the children questions, such as:

1. Why do you think the author did not give the hero of the story a name?
2. Could she have circumvented the use of a name by any other technique? (Yes, by using first person, for example).
3. Do your emotions change when you read a story where the hero has a name, as compared to one in which he doesn't? Why or why not?
4. Would this technique have worked if there had been more than one character in the story?
5. How do you choose appropriate names for characters when you write a story?
6. What are the names of some of your favorite story characters?
7. What are your favorite names? Why?
8. What information can a name provide about a person? What information does it not provide?

Have the children write a short paragraph or a few sentences describing an action someone is doing, without naming the person. Then, have them rewrite using a name. Let them read out their sentences to the class. Are there differences in the way the sentences affect listeners?

Ask each student to write down the name of a “good” cartoon character, the name of a “bad” or naughty cartoon character, the name of the hero/heroine in a serious novel, and the name of a villain in a serious novel. Read out the names and compare and contrast them. How do they sound? What reaction does the name evoke? Can the students find some general patterns in the names they have compared?

## **The Hunt (History)**

### Prehistory

Discuss the term history with the children. What is the meaning of the word history? What period of time is considered history? What is prehistory?

For how long have human being lived on earth? In what ways have we modified the planet?

Explore the history of human beings as a species. Despite the many cultural and national differences, are there broad historical trends that we can make out? Where is the human race headed?

## **The Hunt (Cross-curricular)**

Use this story to start a discussion with the children about fear.

1. Why was the boy afraid at the beginning of the story?
2. What makes you afraid?
3. What is fear?

### Sports extension activity

Ask the children to imagine what games stone age children might have played. What were the limitations they may have experienced? What did they have at their disposal to play with? What games could they not have played (by virtue of the materials used, for instance)?

Let children invent their own games (individually or in groups) that they would have liked to play if they had lived during the stone age.

Have the children plan a stone age sports hour (or entire day) when they teach one another the games and play the sports that they made up (or others that they all know and enjoy) that could have been played by stone age children.

## Footloose in the City (English)

The use of first person

Comprehension and Composition

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Practice and understand the use of the first person.
2. Convert sentences from first to second to third person singular.
3. Use critical thinking skills to understand the reasons why an author may decide to use first person.
4. Write a short autobiographical piece.

Plan ideas:

In this story, I used first person to avoid naming the protagonist, as we do not have reliable information on names that were in use during the Indus Valley period. Ask your students questions to help them understand and discuss the use of the first person.

1. In what sort of writing is first person most common? (autobiography)
2. Do you feel closer to the narrator when first person is used?
3. What are the limitations of using first person? (The author/narrator cannot describe events outside of his/her point of view)
4. Is first person common in poetry? Why do you think that is?
5. Read out a paragraph from an autobiography and one from a biography of the same famous person. Let the children compare and discuss the differences between the two approaches.

Assign a set of sentences to the children. Have them rewrite each sentence in first, second and third person.

Read them a poem (such as Wordsworth's daffodils) in which first person is used. Ask them to describe the poem (they will automatically have to use third person).

Have each child write one sentence in first person. After one child reads out the sentence, let the one sitting to his/her write tell the class what the first child said. In this way, the children can practice first/third person changes orally.

Ask children to write a short autobiographical note – a visit to some place that they enjoyed, for instance.

## **Footloose in the City (History)**

### Ancient civilizations - comparisons

Use the story as a starting point to compare various ancient civilizations. What were their similarities and differences?

Why do civilizations come to power? Why do they decline? Have the children explore reasons for the rise and fall of different civilizations.

Discuss the different theories for the fall of Indus valley civilization, as well as for its spread. What evidence is there for competing theories?

## **Footloose in the City (Cross-curricular)**

Use this story to start a discussion on generosity.

1. Why was the father pleased with his son's choice of gifts?
2. Why do we give?
3. To whom do we give?
4. What is charity?
5. What is compassion?
6. What does it mean to give?
7. Can giving be selfishly motivated?

### Art extension activities

Give the children pictures of seals. Ask them to copy out the writing on the seals and make new patterns using the pictographic Mohenjodaro script.

Give children clay and have them carve out their own seals. They can leave the seals to "bake" in the sun and air-dry.

Make bead jewelry with the children. Bring in pictures of ancient lapis-lazuli jewelry from different cultures to give children some ideas of the types of necklaces or amulets they can make.

## A Question of Belonging (English)

Emotions

Comprehension and Composition

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Analyze the story.
2. Understand how a protagonist grows in most stories.
3. Identify words used to show the changes in the protagonist's feelings.

Plan suggestion:

Have your students divide a page into three columns, labeled beginning, middle and end of the story. Each column is to be divided into three rows.

In the first row, ask the children to write down adjectives describing how Agasilaos feels in the beginning, middle and end of the story,

In the second row, ask the children to write down his actions (the actions to which his feelings lead him).

In the third row, ask them to look for words in the story that substantiate their arguments.

Ask: What words can you see in the story that help you understand how he feels?

In the end, the page should look somewhat like this

	Beginning	Middle	End
Feelings			
Actions			
Words from the story			

Ask the students to summarize their favorite stories in 3 lines. The first sentence should say something about the beginning, the second about the middle and the third about the end of the story. Did they hero/heroine of the story undergo a change in character? Can they think of stories in which the hero/heroine remains the same throughout (no change in character)?

## A Question of Belonging (History)

Perspectives on Alexander

Alexander is frequently referred to as “Alexander the great” but not by all cultures. How and why might the Persians differ in their ideas of Alexander?

Why is conquest often valued historically? Have all nations been equally interested in conquest at all times? What are some reasons that people want to conquer other nations? In today's world, are things greatly changed?

How many years have there been, in human history, when no one in the world was participating in any war?

What were some of the reasons Alexander's army stopped fighting?

Other than war and conquest, in what other ways can and have cultures come to India?

### **A Question of Belonging (Cross curricular)**

Use this story to explore issues of culture with the children.

1. Why was Agasilaos teased and taunted?
2. What is an identity crisis? Why do we feel a need to identify with a group?
3. What is racism? What are some other divisions that exist in society?
4. What is tradition?
5. What is culture?

Art and music extension activities.

Bring pictures of Gandhara sculptures of the Buddha (as well as other styles) into the classroom. Also bring photographs of traditional Greek sculptures. Can the children spot similarities and differences and identify the "Greek" elements of influence? Help them separate Gandhara from the others.

Give the children some clay and have them sculpt their own images of the Buddha.

Listen to "fusion" music with the class. Have them explore the differences between North and South Indian music and compare these to "Jugalbandi" fusion music that brings the two together.

Explore the similarities and differences between Western and Indian classical music systems. An excellent resource is Ravi Kiran's tiny book "Appreciating Carnatic Music." Allow children to compare western music to Indian music on their own, and then add to their ideas. Then, listen to "fusion" music by Shakti and other groups, which brings the two together.

## **To Follow a Dream (English)**

### Oral skills and presentation

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Practice oral communication skills.
2. Use theatre as a means of expressing their comprehension of the story.
3. Follow the development of dialogue in a story.

Read a short play (ask each child to read a few lines, by turns). Ask the children to compare stories with plays.

1. How is dialogue presented in a story? How is dialogue presented in a play?
2. How do scenes change in a play?
3. What directions do authors give to actors?
4. How are costumes described in plays?

Ask the children to rewrite the story in the form of a play. They need not copy out all the dialogue. They may be given the freedom to shorten and adapt as they see fit. They should divide the story into different scenes. For each short scene, have them describe the scenery/backdrop, costumes, etc. They must begin the play by listing all the characters. They may or may not need to use a narrator.

Write a play yourself, using the story. Have the children take turns acting out the parts in class. After they act, have them discuss how acting differs from merely reading out the story. Allow a child or few children to act as directors, telling the actors where to stand, how to move and so on.

How do they deal with the play within the play?

Ask children to do projects on different playwrights and theatres and styles of plays and acting. How do films differ from live act plays? What is puppet theatre? What is street theatre? In what different ways are plays staged? Compare and discuss: Elizabethan/Shakespearean theatre, Greek tragedies, Gupta plays (which always ended happily).

## **To Follow a Dream (History)**

### The skewed history of science

Dick Teresi's book, "Lost Discoveries" is an excellent resource on this topic, as is George Joseph's "Crest of the peacock."

What are some discoveries wrongly attributed to Western scientists and mathematicians? Why is proper credit sometimes not given to others?

Have attitudes to science and religion differed around the world? In what way? How have attitudes changed over time in India?

What are some major mathematical inventions that were made in India? Why are they important? What would be impossible without them?

### **To Follow a Dream (Cross curricular)**

Use this topic to begin a discussion on careers and/or conflict.

1. Why did Skanda and his father come into conflict in the beginning?
2. What is conflict?
3. How does conflict arise? Why does it arise?
4. How do we try to deal with conflict? Can we successfully overcome conflict?
5. What skills did Skanda want to acquire?
6. What “skills” do we value in society today?
7. How does our education contribute to our careers?
8. Does education do more than train us to be technicians?
9. Are we truly innovative?
10. What is a discovery?
11. What is learning?
12. What is aptitude? What is intelligence?

Mathematics extension activity

Use the story as a starting point to compare Roman and Indo-Arabic numerals. Have the children compare the advantages and disadvantages of each system.

Experiment with different base systems. How does the “Indian” decimal system (base 10) help or hinder calculations?

Bertrand Russell reputedly said to an Indian mathematician that Indians contributed nothing to the field of mathematics. As the Indian mathematician fumed, he explained, that without the Indian idea of nothing, nothing would be possible in mathematics. Explore the importance and use of the “zero” with the class— why do we need a symbol for this concept? What couldn’t we do if we did not have a way to express this symbol? How does this symbol expand our mathematical capabilities?

## **A Westward Journey (English)**

### Timeline

#### Comprehension and composition

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Follow the main events of the story.
2. Develop a timeline for the story.
3. Practice writing their own compositions.

Lesson plan suggestions:

Ask the students to develop a timeline, showing the main events that occur in the story and when they think the events occurred. (For example, can they estimate how long the journey took? Answers will differ. Let them discuss this. When, during the journey did Lee see the untouchable? How long were they in Prayag?). This could be done by making two columns, and writing down the main events, in order, in the first column, and then guessing when each event occurred. They may start the timeline with Lee's departure from his homeland, if they wish, although this is not directly discussed in the story.

After they complete their timelines, ask them to prioritize the events. Which were the main events that took place?

Encourage the students to write a paragraph describing Lee's thoughts as he leaves for the University. What questions may have been in his mind? What worries and anxieties? What expectations and excitement? They can write in first person (using Lee's voice) or in the third person.

Students may expand on this assignment to write a prequel to the story, describing Lee's departure from his homeland, arrival at the University, meeting with Sariputta and so on.

## **A Westward Journey (History)**

### Religious history of India

Discuss the lives of Buddha and Mahavira. Compare their philosophies.

Celebrate Buddha Jayanthi and Jain festivals in your classroom.

Talk about the revival of Buddhism under Ambedkar.

Compare the reigns of Ashoka and Harsha. Children could create two columns to compare them and differences in their attitude to government, under various selected or assigned headings.

Has any other king renounced war, as Ashoka did? What does it mean to renounce war? What allowed Ashoka to do this? Why? Has any other nation's leader renounced war?

Ask the children to do a project on the spread of Buddhism. Half the class could concentrate on the spread of Buddhism in the past and its assimilation/association with Shinto in Japan as well as its entry into China, Thailand, and so on, while the other half assesses and presents the status of Buddhism today – the different sects, the status of Buddhism in America and the West, the state of Tibetan Buddhism and so on.

### **A Westward Journey (Cross curricular)**

Use this topic to discuss religiosity and conditioning with the children.

1. What are the different religions that Sariputta and Lee encounter?
2. What are the different religions you know of? Are they different?
3. What do religions do or try to do?
4. Is there a difference between the “East” and the “West” in terms of religion and/or culture?
5. Explore the idea of “East” and “West” and the ways in which this is interpreted / entrenched in some human thought. Is this a real or apparent difference?
6. Is there such a thing as cultural conditioning? Are we conditioned in different ways in different cultures?
7. Do humans require religion?
8. What does it mean to be religious?
9. What does it mean to “follow” a religious leader? To belong to a religious institution?

Geography extension activity - what's East?

Bring an atlas or a few atlases into the classroom, preferably atlases published at different times. Compare the political boundaries over time.

Ask students to locate the Greenwich meridian and the international date line. What do these arbitrary lines help us to do?

Help the children understand that “East” and “West” are relative terms, and that locating something as east or west depends on one's point of view/ current location.

## **The Storm (English)**

Use of flashback

Comprehension and composition.

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Identify the use of flashback in stories.
2. Practice writing compositions.

Lesson plan suggestions:

Ask the students to identify the “flashbacks” in the story. Discuss the use of “flashbacks” in films and books. Why is this technique used? What would have to be done if the story had to be written without any flashbacks?

Write a sequel to the story, using the information presented on what happened after Rustum’s arrival. The sequel could, but does not have to, focus on the incident with Jadav Rana (with Rustum witnessing it first hand).

## **The Storm (History)**

Refugees

India was among the earliest nations to recognize and provide asylum to religious refugees. What does it mean to be a refugee?

What risks are run when political asylum is granted? Have Indian kings ever refused to grant political asylum? (Yes, on rare occasions, for instance when a king was fleeing the “Mongol hordes”).

When did India create rather than shelter refugees?

What happens to refugees? What conditions create refugees? How many refugees were estimated during the partition and then during the Bangladesh war?

What countries in the recent past have had to face refugee crises? Why? Could this pain have been prevented? How?

Assign different refugee topics for the children to research on their own and then make oral presentations to the class on the plight/status of their selected refugee group: Tibetan refugees, Jewish refugees of the past in India and of the holocaust in America, refugees from Rwanda, Afghan refugees etc.

## **The Storm (Cross curricular)**

This story may be used to begin a discussion on the subject of death.

1. Did you feel upset when you read about Rustum's mother's death?
2. What is death?
3. Is death something we are afraid of? Why?

Science extension activity

Use this story as a starting point to explore the question: how do we navigate? Why is longitude important to navigation? How did the ancients navigate?

You may also use this story to explain the use of a compass, the earth's magnetic field and magnetism in general.

## **The Forbidden Temple (English)**

Character sketch

Comprehension and composition.

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Practice writing a character sketch.
2. Use imagination to write a paragraph describing a character's outward appearance.

Lesson suggestion:

Ask students to write character sketches of Venil and the Swamini. What are some similarities between the two characters?

What evidence (words) can they find in the story that help them understand how each character feels, thinks and is like? Have them underline the words and call them out, so that you can list them on the board, under the headings "Venil's character" and "Swamini's character."

After the students have explored the inner natures of the two characters, allow the students to use their imagination to write a description of the way the Swamini looks. How old do they imagine her to be? What does she look like?

## **The Forbidden Temple (History)**

Reform movements in various religions

Discuss different types of temple architecture. Then, present a slide show with pictures of Indian temples. Give the children clues, but don't name the temples. Have them try to identify the temples and write down on a piece of paper, the name, place, date and dynasty in which they think the temples were built.

Ask the children to write, share and discuss their experiences of temple visits. What architectural aspects did they find most interesting? Try to present pictures or bring in sculptures showing some classic South Indian art and architectural features (such as the decorative "chains" of stone carved into the corners of some temples, the moving spheres inside the mouths of some yalis, and so on).

Sashikala Ananth has written a number of books on ancient temple architecture in India which could provide additional background and information to the teacher.

Talk about the temple and the central role it played in the history of the South: as a granary, as the place where people congregated to pray, as the stronghold of culture and art, as a sanctuary.

Discuss the downfall of Hinduism, and allow children to trace the periods when it was all-embracing versus when it went through a “dark age” – helping children to separate the essence of the religion from the unfortunate chaff that accumulated. Read to them from Vivekananda and discuss the revival of Hinduism under his leadership.

What is religious freedom? At what times in Indian history was religious freedom provided and when was it suppressed? What is the current state of affairs in India? What countries today profess to have religious freedom?

Compare the reform movement in Hinduism with reform movements in other religions – for instance, with Protestantism and Martin Luther. Ask the children to research Luther’s reforms and the “Western” reformation period.

### **The Forbidden Temple (Cross curricular)**

Use this story to begin a discussion on violence.

1. Why did Venil feel ill-treated by society?
2. Why do we hurt one another?
3. What are some different societal ways we have developed to hurt one another?
4. How does it feel to be hurt?
5. What is violence?
6. Can we live in a way that takes us beyond violence?

Art extension activity

Have the children design and build a model of a temple, church, or town. Depending on the amount of time you would like to invest, you may have them make “to scale” models of their homes, classrooms, schools or other buildings. Bring in architectural plans. Discuss the difficulties that arise when one wishes to build a tall structure.

What techniques were used in the construction of different temples? Compare and contrast temples from different periods and locations.

Compare temples with churches and mosques. What are some differences/ similarities in their art and architecture?

## Boat Song (English)

Description

Comprehension and Composition

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Follow the descriptive elements of the story.
2. Compare description with dialogue.
3. Write his/her own descriptions.
4. Understand the difference between similes and metaphors.

Lesson plan suggestions:

Have the children compare a page that has primarily description (such as the first page of this story) with one that has mostly dialogue (such as the page opposite the illustration in *To Follow a Dream*). How do the pages differ, visually?

Ask children to identify the words that describe the time of day and the place where the story opens. What sentences do they like the most? How are descriptions of the river and river bank interspersed through the story?

What sentences provide clues that the man who asks Aditya to ferry him across is more than a commoner, and that he is not Aditya's "usual" fare? What actions suggest that he may be the King?

Explain to the children the difference between a simile and a metaphor. Can the children identify the similes used in the descriptive portions of the story? Are metaphors used?

Ask the children to write a paragraph or poem describing their favorite time of day, using similes and metaphors.

Have them write another poem or paragraph describing their favorite natural "water" form – waterfall, ocean, river, stream, pond, puddle or lake.

## Boat Song (History)

History of South India

How far did South Indian culture spread? Bring pictures of Borabudur and Angkor Wat for discussion.

Divide the class into groups, based on the major dynasties of Southern India. Have each group write a set of quiz questions about their dynasty. Let each group then quiz the others about their dynasty. Ask them an extra set of questions that you formulate!

When did the Tamils first go to Sri Lanka? Why? What is the current situation? Discuss the ethnic conflict in the region.

Have the children do research into the different types of ships and sails that were created by the various world cultures and at different periods in history. What were the advantages and disadvantages of different designs?

### **Boat Song (Cross curricular)**

Use this story to discuss the ideas of wealth and security.

1. What did Aditya hope for? Why did he not think it was within his reach?
2. Why do we desire wealth?
3. What does wealth bring to us?
4. What is security? What makes us feel secure?
5. Do we need security?

Science extension activity

Use the story as a starting point to explain the way ships function. Experiment with floating and sinking. Explain the Archimedes principle. Why does an iron nail sink whereas iron ships float?

## **For Love of a Game (English)**

Sports reporting

Comprehension and Composition

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Practice presentation skills.
2. Write his/her own sports report.
3. Explore verbs, adverbs and tenses that bring action alive.

Lesson plan suggestion:

Explain to the children the use of verbs and adverbs. Ask them to list verbs describing the game of chaugan in the story.

Ask the children to speak about the sport they enjoy the most. Have them listen to a live sports report on the radio or tape. Read and have them read sports reports from newspapers and the internet. Have them list verbs that help bring the sport alive to the spectator or the reader. Over the radio, commentators often use the present tense, describing an action as it takes place. How does it feel to listen to someone speaking in present tense?

Ask children to write their own sports report, in present and in past tense. Which was easier to write? Why? Which tense is more often used?

Have each child present a sports report to the class. They could choose to make a short (5 minute) report of any sport /match that they see. They may also write about a fictitious match.

## **For Love of a Game (History)**

Mughal rule in India

Have children pick lots with names of the Mughal emperors written on them. Group them based on the names they have picked. Each group works together to summarize the major features of that Mughal's rule. Then the groups take turns to present their summaries, orally, to the entire class.

Share pictures of examples of Mughal architecture with the class. Discuss the current status of the Taj Mahal and the effect the Mathura oil refinery may have had on this architectural masterpiece.

Many of Akbar's reforms were similar to reforms his ancestor Chingiz (Genghis) Khan put into place in his empire, many years before him. Assign the students a research project that helps them understand the nature of the rule of Khan, and why, despite his excellent administration and humanitarian reforms, his reputation was (unjustly and incorrectly) tainted by history.

What is Sufism? Have the children explore Sufi ideas.

### **For Love of a Game (Cross curricular)**

Use this story to discuss competition.

1. Why did the emperor love the sport of chaugan? Why did Mumtaz like it?
2. What sport do you like best? Why?
3. How do you feel when you play a sport? Do you like winning? What does it feel like when you lose?
4. Do you identify with a particular team when you watch or follow a sport? What is this feeling of identification?
5. Can you participate in sports without competing?
6. How important is competition in sport? In what other spheres of life do we come across competition?
7. How does competition affect us? Is competition inside us? Why do we compete?
8. Does competition exist in nature, amongst animals, for example?
9. What is competition? Is competition necessary for motivation? Can we strive for excellence in a non-competitive atmosphere?
10. Does competition help us learn? Can learning exist when there is competition?

Art extension activity - The art of calligraphy

Calligraphy was highly developed by the mughals. Have the children look at different examples of calligraphy.

Ask them to write their names in calligraphy. How much longer does it take to do that compared to writing a name in normal handwriting? Do they enjoy looking at the product? Do they feel the effort put into decorating the words was worthwhile?

Let the children explore calligraphy using different languages and scripts.

## **Checkmate (English)**

### Plot

#### Comprehension

Learning objectives:

The student will

1. Study the development of plots in short stories.
2. Identify and describe the plot of this and other stories.

Lesson plan suggestions:

Discuss the story with the children. What is the plot of the story? Does the disease play a central/essential role in the plot? Where is this introduced first? How does the end tie-in with the rest of the story?

Study the plots of other short stories with the children. Have them summarize the plot of their favorite stories in a single sentence. Is this hard to do? Why? How does one separate the main plot from subsidiary themes?

## **Checkmate (History)**

### Timeline

Ask the children to make their own historical timelines, using 3 columns – the first to list events in history that they consider important, the second to list the approximate date of occurrence of the event, and the third to place the chapters in the book in context. They should use their text books to help them prepare the list of events and dates.

Have the children compare and contrast the “first” and “second” wars of Indian independence. You may wish to have them do this orally, by participating in a discussion and writing down points they contribute on the board, or have them do this individually, as a writing exercise in which they write down a page or paragraph about each revolt, or compare contrasting features side by side in two columns.

Use the information presented in the book along with other information on the Indian Freedom struggle as a starting point. Ask children to look at old maps showing the extent of the British Empire. Why did the British come to India? To what other countries did they go and why? What were the other major colonial powers?

What has the effect of colonization been on colonized nations? Did the British “divide” other nations as they did India and Pakistan? (Yes, Palestine, Ireland, and more).

Help the children learn about other freedom movements. What are some freedom movements of the recent past?

Compare the American revolt with the Indian revolt against the British.

What influence did Thoreau's writings have on Gandhi?

How was Martin Luther King Jr., influenced by Gandhi?

### **Checkmate (Cross curricular)**

Use this story to start a discussion on freedom.

1. Was Sharanjit a patriot? Was her family as patriotic as she was?
2. What is patriotism? What is nationalism?
3. Is non-violence the opposite of violence?
4. Why do we carry flags? What do flags mean to us?
5. Why do we have political borders?
6. Can we have a world without borders?
7. What causes war? List some reasons why countries conquer one another.
8. Can countries oppress one another without conquest? Give some examples of this.
9. What is independence?
10. When a nation achieves independence, are all its citizens also free?
11. How do different governments define freedom? Does the concept of freedom differ from one culture to another?
12. What is freedom? What does it mean to be free?

#### Music extension activity

Ask the children to sing the national anthem. What do the words mean? Can anyone else sing another patriotic song? Does anyone know the national anthems of other countries? How are they similar or different? What poetic words or musical elements are used to infuse/inflame nationalistic feeling?

## **Additional information**

### **Stone Age**

How was the first dog domesticated? We will never know, but we do have evidence that Stone Age man in India had domesticated the dog. Graves have been found in which Stone Age men were buried, on their sides, with the knees bent. Sometimes a dog, perhaps the man's most faithful companion, was buried by his side.

Many many years ago, during the Stone Age, from 10000 BC to 2500 BC, human beings lived a life that was probably similar to that of a few tribes existing today. In many tribes, children have to undergo some type of rite-of-passage, to prove that they have become adults. This story imagines a possible rite of passage ritual that a young boy may have had to undergo during the stone age, in order to prove to the tribe that he was capable of contributing to it as an adult hunter.

Unlike later periods in history, we know very little about the thoughts and ideas these ancient people had. It is because at that time, humans lived such a simple life style that they did not leave behind very much that could stand the test of time. We have little evidence of the kind of clothes they wore, how they initially communicated with one another and later developed a language, etc. What we can do is make intelligent guesses about what probably happened, based on the few artifacts (ancient objects) that have survived until this day.

Here are a few facts that we do know. About two million years ago, our ape-like ancestors evolved. Initially, apes crouched on all fours, and did not even stand upright. But about forty thousand years ago or so, our ancestors began to stand upright. The first humans were probably food gatherers, who moved from place to place, living a nomadic lifestyle. After many generations, Stone Age people began to settle down and live in groups, and even construct crude shelters. In the Old Stone Age (10000 to 8000 BC), humans lived in Western, Southern and Central India.

Many crucial discoveries were made during the Stone Age; one of the most important ones was probably the use of fire. Unlike their counterparts in Europe and the Middle East who commonly used flint tools, Stone Age people in India and Africa mostly used tools made of quartzite. At first, people probably ate raw meat, and then learned to cook their food. Their tools and vessels grew in sophistication. As they changed from a nomadic lifestyle into a more settled routine, they discovered how to tame animals, grow crops for food, and fire pottery.

In those early days of human existence, activities such as gathering berries, fruit and roots, fishing, hunting, making tools and building shelters must have taken up nearly all the time that people had. Yet, they also found ways to appreciate themselves and the beauty of nature which surrounded them, and with which they were in such close contact. They used their spare time engaged in crafts such as making bracelets and necklaces out of materials like bone and shell. They also were artistic. Bhimbhetka in Madhya Pradesh is one site where drawings and painting are thought to have been made by "prehistoric" people.

Stone Age people lived in many parts of our globe, so it is reasonable to assume that each of these communities probably made discoveries independently. Many of these

may have happened by accident. This story imagines what may have happened somewhere, during the Stone Age in India, and how one boy from an ancient Stone Age tribe may have come up with what was then a very new idea – to domesticate a wild animal.

## **Indus**

Unfortunately, although the people of this civilization had a script, we have not been able to read it yet, and much about them, including their spoken language, remains hidden from us. We do, however, know a few things, on which the story was based. Although there were many large cities such as Mohenjodaro and Harappa, the cities were surrounded and supported by a network of villages in the region, such as the one in the story, to which the narrator belongs. The description of the male stranger he saw in the city is based on a bust that was unearthed of a person whom some historians feel may have been a Sumerian man, and others think was an Indus priest. The descriptions of the presents the narrator bought for his family are based on actual artifacts discovered at Indus sites.

There are many interesting questions, however, that we have been unable to answer for sure. Historians are divided in their views about how the civilization grew, survived and ended. How did the people of the Indus govern themselves? No palace has been discovered, nor, for that matter have coins or images that strongly and undoubtedly suggest one supreme ruler. Some historians think that the civilization may have been ruled by a centralized council of representatives, with some early form of self-government, perhaps even one that was chosen by an early form of democracy. Others insist that there must have been a king or a group of nobles who ruled over the vast civilization. It has also been suggested that the people of the Indus may just have lived together in amity, with a common acceptance of certain laws and an understanding of shared values that did not have to be enforced on them from above and thus did not require a central authority. How difficult it is these days to imagine that such a unique society could have existed!

This civilization was indeed very different from most others in existence then and now. Another of its most distinct features was the lack of weaponry! This is despite the fact that, in contrast to other Bronze Age civilizations, there was wide availability of copper and bronze (from which weapons could be made) in this region. No evidence has been found to suggest that the people had an army. There isn't even a single drawing that depicts an offensive attack, unlike the Mesopotamian seals that often bear images of violent struggles and conquest. Although the people of the Indus built great structures such as the baths and granaries described in the story, they never built defensive structures such as walls to keep out invaders. Would it not be wonderful if countries today were just as peaceful, and no one felt the need to hoard weapons, have an army or keep others away? Is it not sad that the trust and calm that may have pervaded this society is lost in our "modern" world?

Unfortunately, the decline of this civilization may have been partly because of its inability to defend itself, according to some historians. There is one theory that less civilized Aryan invaders with greater military capabilities may have routed the people of the Indus. Most historians, however, believe that the civilization declined as a result of

other reasons, such as changes in climate such as floods or dry periods. Still others think that there was no difference between Aryans and Dravidians, and that the people of India have remained one throughout history, although the Indus valley people do appear to have slowly migrated south. This last view is, at present, not widely accepted.

## Vedic

Although the book did not have a story about Vedic times, here are some facts about this period. First, some Vedic names. Sumanta and Paila were disciples of the Vedic sage Vyasa. The name Sudas belonged to the king of the Bharata tribe that dwelt on the banks of the Saraswati River. His name is recorded in the Vedas.

The gurukula system of education described in this story was common in Vedic times. Young boys were sent to live with, work for and study under learned sages of the time. In the early Vedic period, women were also seemingly well educated. Gargi, Vishvara, Gosha and Apala were some of the erudite female seers and philosophers.

Most historians of today believe that the people who composed the Vedas (a collection of ancient Hindu hymns) were Aryan nomads who came to India from the region around the Caspian sea, and then settled down here. The Aryans were adept warriors who may have routed any remaining indigenous Indus Valley people that remained in the region. Many scholars feel, however, that there may have been a time gap between the decline of the Indus Valley civilization and the coming of the Aryans.

The early Aryans were tribal stockbreeders. The term *raja* was applied to the chiefs of the tribes. The raja was not necessarily the son of the former raja, although in many tribes and with the passage of time, the raja was often a hereditary chief. The raja did not take on the responsibility for governing the tribe single handedly, nor did he have absolute power. There were two governing houses known as the *samiti* and the *sabha*, that played an important role in managing the tribe. The samiti is thought to have been composed of some chosen “great” or “wise” people. The sabha was a larger body that consisted of all free tribesmen or heads of families. Thus early Aryan society was a type of oligarchy (ruled by a select few) rather than an absolute monarchy (ruled by a single all-powerful king). The two councils exerted a great deal of influence on the raja’s decisions and in some cases, their approval was required before he could ascend the throne.

Although the Aryans had no written script when they arrived, they had a high degree of sophistication in terms of philosophical thought and poetic creativity. The Vedas, that were handed down by word of mouth for many generations, contain some of the earliest records of philosophical doubt. They also contain some of the first expressions of the concept of monotheism (a single God), and a formless God that is omnipresent (present everywhere), an idea that was further developed in the Upanishads and later Hindu texts. The Vedas were the only texts considered by the Aryans to be *sruthi* or revealed by the Gods. All other texts are considered to be *smriti* or written purely by man.

When the Aryans arrived in India, their society may already have been subdivided into two classes: nobles (*kshatra*) and commoners (*vis*). There is evidence to suggest that during the early Vedic period caste divisions were flexible, and arose from a societal division of labour (a matter of choosing one’s profession). By the end of the Rig Vedic

period, however, society was divided into four castes. The highest caste was the priestly *Brahmin* caste. The kings and warriors were the *Kshatriya*, the traders and merchants were the *Vaishya*, and the serfs were the *Shudra*. The priests later inserted verses into texts to provide religious sanction to the castes, to ensure that their position at the pinnacle of the pyramid was maintained, despite the fact that caste was a social not religious institution. Treatment of the Shudras became shameful and deplorable as time progressed and the caste system grew rigid.

## **Gandhara**

Many Indian historians did not even bother to record Alexander's invasion of India (326 BCE)! The Greek and Indian cultures did interact with one another prior to his invasion, however, and continued to influence each other later in history also. Greek and Roman merchants first approached the west coast of India and then the east. Some of the first Greeks to settle in India may have been mercenaries (paid soldiers) serving under the Persian kings Cyrus and Darius. When Alexander arrived, he found these Greeks and their descendants well established. Greeks who were political dissidents were also sometimes deported to settle in the region that is now Pakistan! Much later, in the time in which Agasilaos lived, sculptors from the Graeco-Roman empire were invited by the Kushana kings, of whom Kanishka (129 CE to 160 CE) is most famous. An inscription on a Gandharan article found at the time bears an inscription saying that it was made by "Agasilaos, overseer at Kanishka's vihara."

It appears that Greeks considered Indians to be good people who lived in cities in a democratic manner, as organized as the Spartans and as just as the best of the Greeks! This appreciative and understanding attitude allowed the Greeks to be quickly and completely assimilated into Indian society. Indian scholars likewise praised the Greeks and their culture. At first, Indo-greek kings possessed Greek titles that were Greek such as Nikator but soon, they adopted Indian titles and even their names began to sound more Indian. Bilingual coins (very rarely seen in the ancient world), bearing both native and Greek scripts, were minted. Intermarriage between the two societies was another sure sign that the Greeks mixed completely with the native population. Many of the Indo-greeks, including nobles and monarchs, became Buddhists.

As the two cultures began to unite, a new art form, that became known as the "Gandhara" school, was born. It is possible that the idea of portraying Buddha in human form originated because of the Greek influence. Early Gandhara art showed figures dressed like Indians, but in "Greek" poses. Later, the sculptors began to truly synthesize Greek and local ideas. A fragment of a Gandharan sculpture, similar to the one Agasilaos created in this story, showing Mara attempting to frighten Siddhartha, is known to exist. In it, groups of soldiers are shown in Graeco-Roman uniforms. At the time of Kanishka, Greece was a part of the Roman empire.

Indo-greeks seem to have rapidly become inseparably and indistinguishably a part of the native culture. Is it reasonable, then, to suppose that any Indo-greek child could have been teased because his mixed parentage? In later years, a few Greek as well as Indian texts refer to the population of "mixed-blood" with concern or disrespect. It seems possible, then, that although the Indo-greek population was predominantly well accepted,

a few people or segments of society may have acted in a manner that was narrow-minded rather than understanding and approving.

This story builds on the idea that although Agasilaos's family possesses a high social standing, one of his acquaintances jealously seeks to hurt him by trying to make him feel alienated, different and foreign. Did such cruel children exist? Maybe, maybe not. What is certain is that there were many talented Indian, Greek and Indo-greek sculptors, who established a school of art that remains a timeless testament to the fruitful fusion of two ancient cultures.

## **Gupta**

During the Gupta period, sciences as well as the arts flourished and were awarded royal patronage. Aryabhata, Varahamihira and other mathematicians seem to have been using a numeral system with place notation and had developed algebra and trigonometry. The decimal system with the place value of zero was invented by Indian mathematicians during the Gupta age. These symbols, which we continue to use today, made their way to Europe through Arabia (because Arabs adopted the system). These numerals are therefore called Indo-Arabic, or sometimes merely Arabic numerals. The Arabs themselves referred to them as Hindsat, or art of Hindustan. The Aryabhattiyam, a text written by Aryabhata, explains many mathematical and astronomical concepts, such as the arithmetic progression of numbers, their squares and cubes, rules of involution and evolution, solving simultaneous equations, geometric properties of circles and calculates the most accurate value of pi that existed in the world until that time. It also states that the earth revolves on its own axis, and explains solar and lunar eclipses. The idea that the sun was the centre of our planetary system and that the moon shone due to reflected light also appears to have been discovered.

Metallurgy was highly developed. Metallurgists were fashioning objects out of rust-resistant iron. The iron pillar at Mehrauli, is an example of existing rust-resistant iron. This process does not appear to have been independently discovered by any other nation. Harisena, the war and peace minister of Samudragupta is credited with writing the Allahabad inscription and composing the Mehrauli pillar inscription, showing him to be a man with many talents. The science of medicine was very advanced. The oldest surviving Indian medical text was written by Charaka, who lived before Gupta times. During the Gupta age, the work of Susruta stands out. In many ways it was more advanced than medical texts that existed in other nations including Europe and China at the time. Dhanvantri, one of the nine gems in Chandra Gupta II's court, wrote a medical glossary. The textile industry produced a type of silk that differed in many ways from the superior Chinese silks of the time. The latter was more expensive and treasured by the Indian elite.

The arts flourished as much as the sciences did. Sculpture, painting, and literature were highly patronized. Kurangi is the name of a character in a play by Bhasa, one of Kalidasa's predecessors. Skanda is the name of a sage in Kalidasa's Shakuntalam. Saumilla and Kaviputra were famous drama writers who lived before Kalidasa, the most famous of them all. Both boys and girls were educated. Girls from rich families were usually tutored on literature, painting, music, managing a household, cooking, weaving, embroidery and supervising the garden. At the age of four or five, boys were generally taught the alphabet and then taught reading and arithmetic, by a tutor if they were from a

wealthy family. Sending a boy to the house of his guru for his education was also a common practice. The joint-family system seems to have existed.

Buddhism and Hinduism co-existed peacefully. Orthodox Hindus had begun to include the Buddha in the Hindu pantheon, as described in the Vishnupurana. Many Brahmins and Kshatriyas seem to have taken up non-traditional occupations. Vaisyas and Sudras were allowed to join the military. Kalidasa often describes inter-caste marriages. Although the caste system was not as rigid as in other periods, the lowest castes were still treated in an appalling manner. Laws were mild, however, and the death penalty was not imposed even for the most serious offenses.

## **Nalanda**

Harshavardhana, was one of India's greatest rulers to come into power after the Gupta period. During his time, the Nalanda university and monastery were well established. Students came from many far-away nations to study there. Important universities also existed in other places, such as Taxila, Ujjain and Gaya.

In those days, the journey was much longer and more difficult than it is today, when all one has to do is hop on an aeroplane. So, students such as Lee had to be very dedicated and motivated to come all the way to India just for a better education. What do you think awaited Lee when he reached India?

Trade between India and China flourished during Harsha's reign. Corals, pearls, precious stones, glassware, incense and perfume were exported from India to Chinese cities. Harsha's Chinese contemporary, emperor Tai Tsung of the T'ang dynasty, sent two royal ambassadors to India. Chinese pilgrims, students and scholars also visited during this period.

One of the most famous Chinese visitors at that time was the Buddhist pilgrim Huien Tsang. He came to India to study Buddhist literature, collect Buddhist relics and make pilgrimages to places of Buddhist interest. Huien Tsang stayed in Kanauj as the king's guest. According to Huien Tsang, who recorded the times in great detail, Harsha was a kind and wise ruler. He was highly educated, and the author of three Sanskrit plays. He was liberal and tolerant of different faiths and forms of worship. He did not tax his subjects heavily. He traveled frequently in order to make himself accessible to his subjects and strove for their well being. He left China in 629 A.D., and made a trip similar to the one described by Lee in the story. His experiences are described in a book he called the "si-yu-ki" or "Record of the Western World." Isn't it interesting to note that to Huien Tsang, India was part of the Western World, as opposed to the countries described by this term today? How clearly this brings out the fact that ideas such as "West" and "East" are entirely relative, arbitrary and highly dependent on one's own origin.

Periodically, the king held a religious festival in which the Buddha, Shiva and the sun were worshipped. Prayag, where Lee went to attend this festival, is now known as Allahabad. Vast sums of money were given to the poor. Bana, the court poet of the time, wrote a eulogy about the king's life, called the *Harshacharithra*. He mentions that Harsha frequently dressed like jewel mountain with wings of precious stones and metals spreading on either side. Harsha was, however, exceedingly generous with his personal wealth. At one of the festivals, he is supposed to have given away everything he owned to

the poor, even his garments, having then had to borrow clothes from his sister Rajyashri, who was a Buddhist. It is upon this legendary incident that this story is based.

Despite his deep interest in Buddhism, Harsha never gave up war, unlike the great emperor Ashoka. Harsha reigned felt that he had to conquer his neighbours in order to merge small kingdoms together under his powerful leadership. He attempted to extend his power into the Deccan and Southern India, but never did so. He suffered a significant defeat at the hands of the brave Chalukyan ruler, Pulikesan II and this effectively prevented the extension of his empire in a southerly direction. His large Northern Indian kingdom was never as strongly connected an entity as Ashoka's Mauryan Empire. He held distant territories in Punjab, Kashmir and Nepal, but these were connected primarily by feudal ties. After his death in 648 C.E., there were many years of confusion and turmoil in Indian politics.

## **Parsi**

Was there really a boy called Rustum who had a vision that lead his people to safety? Perhaps, or perhaps not. This story is a work of imagination, but it is based on certain facts.

Zoroastrians are followers of the Prophet Spitaman Zarathushtra who lived in Iran, around 1200 BCE. Ahura Mazda was the deity that Zoroaster believed to be the one true God. Zoroaster composed many beautiful poetic *Gathas*, which are divided into *Yasnas*, like the one in the story that Rustum chanted to calm himself and Hutaosa when the storm struck. All of Zarathushtra's words that remain are collectively known as the Avesta. They form the holy book of the religion.

For nearly a thousand years, Zoroastrianism was rooted in Iran, as three empires, the Achaemenian, Parthian, and Sasanian, rose and fell. One of the first kings to convert to Zoroastrianism was Vishtaspa, whose wife was also called Hutaosa. In 559 BCE, Cyrus II became king. His power grew and with it grew the first mighty Persian Empire. His vast territory stretched so far that it touched seven seas: the Red, the Aegean, the Black, the Caspian, the Indian, the Persian and the Mediterranean. One of his sons, Cambyses, annexed Egypt. Daraya-vohumanah (meaning he who sustains Good Thought), was another powerful monarch of the Archaemenian empire, whose thoughts were greatly influenced by the teachings of Zarathushtra. The Greeks shortened his name to Darius.

The Archaemenian Empire fell at the hands of Alexander, who, in a barbaric celebration of his victory, set fire to the capital city Persepolis. To the Persians, Alexander's behaviour did not merit the title "great." Instead, they gave him the title *guzastag*, a term that they also used to describe *Ahriman*, the evil spirit of the Zoroastrian religion.

Five and a half centuries after the fall of the first Persian Empire, king Adeshir founded the Sassnian dynasty. Under the Sassnians, Zoroastrianism was honoured as the imperial religion. The story tells of how the Sassnian Empire finally succumbed to the Arab conquest.

A small band of Persians fled to the hills after they had been defeated. After some trials in the hills, they set sail to find a land where they could practice their religion with freedom and in peace. There is a legend that a violent storm rocked the vessel that these

brave adventurers had boarded. It is said that the storm abated magically when they prayed to Ahura Mazda, promising to build a fire temple if they reached land safely.

The voyagers landed in Diu, an Island near Gujarat. After spending many years here, they set sail again and landed in Sanjan, which is also on the West Coast of India. The ruler, Jadhav Rana, allowed the strangers to settle in his kingdom. According to Parsi lore, the king was at first reluctant to give the foreigners permission to land, because his kingdom was already so crowded with people. Legend has it that he filled a goblet to the brim with milk, saying to them, "I would gladly let you live with us, except that my land is as full with people as this goblet is with milk." The Parsi priest is then supposed to have taken a spoonful of sugar and added it to the milk, replying, "We shall live with you as the sugar in the milk. It sweetens the milk and does not cause the goblet to overflow." The king was so pleased by this display of wisdom that he allowed the Parsis to live in his kingdom after all.

This story builds on some facts as well as some ideas of what could have taken place. It is not a precise historical retelling of recorded events, but rather an attempt to imagine what *may* have happened when a few families of faithful Zoroastrians left their land forever, uncertain of what the future would bring them and yet fiercely determined to preserve their freedom and their faith.

## **The Bhakthi movement**

Most of the books in this series discuss the lives of children from privileged parts of society. However, even in the age of the Guptas, some people, such as those from lower castes were not treated well. Women were also treated poorly during many periods of history.

Weavers traditionally belong to the Shudra caste. In temple towns, as the importance of textile trade increased, weaver castes were associated with some amount of upward social movement. Thus, even among the shudras, there were middle ranking farmer and artisans groups, as well as lower ranking artisans such as tanners and butchers.

Weaving is an occupation that is still handed down within a family. Women and children can participate in the weaving process. Unfortunately, in India today, children are sometimes illegally employed in this Industry. They are forced to sit at cramped looms in damp, dark rooms, twisting threads, dipping their hands in boiling water and handling dead silk worms that can cause many infections. Needless to say, these children can be treated horribly and inhumanely and violently by their employers, who may beat them and underpay them.

The Bhakthi movement developed between 800 and 1200 C. E. in India. One of the teachings of this movement was anyone could attain God, and experience God directly, so long as they had true faith and love. The movement was inspired by the 63 Nayanmar saints and 12 Alvar saints of South India, who lived between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. The Nayanmar saints came from various castes, ranging from Brahmins to Shudra leather workers. The Alvars were also from various castes, ranging from Periya Alvar who was a Brahmin and Kulashekara who was a ruler, to Nammalvar from the lowly Vellala caste, Tirumangai Alvar who came from a group of thieves and Tirupanni Alvar, who was an untouchable. A few of the Alvar and Nayanmar saints were women.

Despite the continued existence of the caste system and the poor treatment of women, it is notable that the saints were all treated with the same respect and worshipped alike, regardless of their gender or caste origin. Many of these saints wrote in the ancient living language of Tamil. These saints gave us the beautiful poems and philosophy contained in the Thevaram, Thiruvagasam and Divyaprapandham. The saint Nadhamuni collected available hymns in a work known as the Nalayira Prabhandham or Anubhava Vedanta, which some Hindus consider to be no less important than the Gita, the Vedas and the Upanishads.

The bhakthi saints practiced what they preached by living lives of simplicity, unselfishness, social equality, social work and service. Many lived lives dedicated to God through service and social work. Saint Basaveshwara of Karnataka tried to elevate the lot of servant women and their children.

The bhakthi movement spread from southern India to the North. Saint Ramananda is considered to be a pioneer of the Bhakthi movement in Northern India. Similar to other bhakthi movement saints, he welcomed Hindus, Muslims and untouchables as disciples. The movement influenced and included many saints who preached the unity of God among religions and worked hard to promote Hindu-Muslim unity. Guru Nanak, who founded the religion of the Sikhs was among those who preached this unity. One of Saint Ramananda's poems is preserved in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy text of the Sikhs.

## **Cholas**

South Indian literature is filled with stories about kings dressing up as commoners in order to mingle with their people and ensure that they were content. When the people expressed displeasure or unhappiness, the king in disguise did not react with anger against them, but rather became upset with himself as he had failed in his duty to keep people happy. This story is not based on any true historical account, but imagines an episode that could have taken place when a South Indian king was traveling incognito.

The temple was the centre of community life in the South. Even today, the South India countryside is dotted with temples. Temples served as schools and were patronized by local princes. Kanchipuram, for example, developed into a major centre of learning, an ancient university where many different subjects were studied.

Charitable activities were organized and carried out by temples. Hospitals were maintained and grain was stored to be distributed in times of famine. Social activities such as marriages and meetings of the townsfolk also took place in temples. Songs and dances and art were given as offerings to God. Temples were thus also the cultural centre of a community.

A great deal of poetry has been written in the South Indian languages. Kamban, Ottakuttan, Pugalendi, Thiruvalluvar, Nadha Muni, Nambiyandar Nambi and Avvaiyar, are some of the famous Tamil poets of ancient times. Tamil poetry was collected together and compiled into books at large assemblies known as Sanghams. Nanniah, Mallikarjuna, Nanechoda, Ashtadiggasas and even the king Krishnadeva Raya himself, were famous Telegu poets. Natarajacharya and Chandraja were two famous Kannada poets. Malayalam, the language of Kerala was spoken by people of many religions – Christians, Jews, Muslims and Hindus. Kerala had a tradition of religious tolerance and people following all these faiths who came as traders or preachers or seeking shelter, were

integrated into the society. India thus became one of the few countries to offer religious asylum to Jews.

South India also has a longstanding maritime history. Communication seems to have existed as early as 950 B.C.E. with Western Asia, where South Indian commodities were sent. At the time of Sophocles, around 450 B.C.E., rice was one of India's chief exports. Crops and spices (such as rice and pepper), precious materials (such as ivory, pearls and gold) as well as exotic animals (such as monkeys and peacocks) were imported by Babylon, Egypt and Greece. In the Ajanta caves and on ancient woodcuts, there are drawings showing ships manned by Dravidians. Vijaya, a royal seafarer and ship builder is said to have crossed over to Sri Lanka and conquered territory there. The islands of the Lakshadweep, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and many islands in the Indian Ocean became part of the Chola Empire. At its height, the Chola empire extended all the way to the Ganga in the North and included parts of Karnataka, Orissa, Central India, some areas on the Coromandel Coast and virtually all of Tamil Nadu. Thus it is reasonable to assume that a poor boatman may have dreamed of owning a larger vessel and one day journeying to far away places. The name Aditya is taken from the name of an early Chola ruler.

## **Akbar**

While a girl called Mumtaz may or may not have lived during Akbar's time, we do know that he enjoyed playing an older version of the game of polo that was called chaugan, in addition to hunting, riding ferocious elephants and horses. It is known that he ordered his chaugan ball to be set on fire so that he could play the game on into the night. There is a mughal painting showing the king chasing the flaming ball on his royal steed. The rules of the present polo game were codified centuries later, by British soldiers.

This was, of course, hardly what Akbar was famous for. Akbar was considered the most accepting of the mughal rulers for other reasons. He abolished the practice of enslaving the wives and children of those defeated after war, cancelled the jizya (a tax levied on non-muslim subjects) and stopped collecting forced contributions from Hindu pilgrims.

Akbar was concerned about the welfare of his subjects. He gave large amounts of money for charity and established kitchens in which free food was cooked and distributed to the poor. He also collected grain to store in case of famine.

Akbar patronized the arts. He was a lover of music. The legendary musician Tansen graced his court.

Akbar also realized the value of a good education. He reformed the school curriculum of the time and provided state money to help Hindu institutions of learning. He revived schools of Sanskrit, directing that boys there should be taught the Vedanta and the commentary of Patanjali. He emphasized that his sons should also be taught Sanskrit, Hindi and Indian history in addition to other subjects. He felt that the focus should not be on reading and memorization, but rather on understanding concepts. He also started a translation bureau through which grown men could be educated. Although he made no state-wide arrangements to educate girls or women, he ensured that his daughters were very well educated.

One of the emperor's most creditable attributes was his tolerance and encouragement of all religious faiths. He married the eldest daughter of the Rajput King

Raja Bihar Mall, and it is said that he allowed her full freedom to pursue her religious faith. He built a house of worship into which he invited Hindus, Parsees, Christians, Jews, Jains and others. He agreed with the Hindu idea that God was the same regardless of which religious approach was used. He also was attracted to the ideas of the Sufi mystics of Islam, who were concerned with the absorption of the soul into God. After learning a great deal about the other religions, he decided that there was no single religion that was perfect or best, but that in all there were both instituted a new religion in which he tried to blend the best of other faiths, called "Din Ilahi."

Akbar's grandfather Babur, is said to have also honored Hindu ascetics, but Akbar went much further than any of the mughals before him. He displayed a remarkable acceptance of all religious faiths which went far beyond the strict traditions under which he had been raised. This, more than anything else, indicated that he had courageous mind, independent thought and a strong character.

Akbar's tolerance is often contrasted with the purported intolerance of Aurangzeb. Many historians, however, feel that Aurangzeb's character has been distorted and denigrated to a large degree. He governed India for nearly as long as Akbar did, and expanded his empire because of his efficiency not cruelty. Although he himself was an orthodox Sunni Muslim, who did not accept Hindus as equals, he tolerated them. His supposed intolerance may be just a legend influenced by exaggerated accounts.

## **The Revolt of 1857**

The British presence in India started as a result of their professed desire to trade. The East India Company began, however, to attempt a takeover of Indian territory. The Company also began to interfere in the struggles between Indian States and used any power they gained to further their interests.

Lord Dalhousie, whom Dhulappa mentions in the story, was a Governor General of the Company and his unjustifiable policy regarding adopted heirs of Indian royalty was known as the Doctrine of Lapse. Kittur, in Karnataka's Belgaum district, was among the first states to fall prey to this policy.

While the series does not incorporate a story about India's first battle for freedom, here are some facts about this. In 1857, Indians all over the country revolted against the British East India Company's unjust policies and territorial conquests.

Queen Chennamma, the second wife of King Mallasarja, was one of those who rode into battle against the British. His first wife, queen Rudramma, died and so did her issue as well as the son of Queen Chennamma herself. The British refused, however, to recognize the right of the adopted heir to the throne, who was a related to Rudramma and her son. Queen Chennamma fought bravely for her cause, but was eventually conquered and spent her last years in prison. Her bravest general, Guru Sidhappa was hanged, along with other prisoners of war. Queen Chennamma died in jail in 1829. Shantala was a noble scholar of Karnataka who lived many centuries prior to 1857 and Dhulappa was the name of Chennamma's father.

The East India Company's government of India led to gathering resentment among the general population. It has been said that just as a farmer does not run a poultry for the benefit of the chickens, neither did the British run their colonies for the benefit of the local population. Far from it, in fact! After the industrial revolution, the British began

buying raw materials from India and exporting British goods to India, destroying many indigenous industries and crafts, most notably the handloom industry. During the Bengal Famine of 1770, that wiped out a third of the province's population, the Company forced the surviving peasants to grow more Indigo, while they continued to starve. There were many major and minor famines between 1770 and 1857, arising partly from the doubling of taxes by the British and their lack of investment in the development of agriculture. The British were also corrupt and the petty officials they established demanded bribes even from the poor. There was little control over looting, oppression and torture by the foreigners and their police force.

Missionaries who made disparaging remarks about Hindus and Muslims were encouraged with grants and land, while taxes were levied on property belonging to mosques and temples. Racist behavior humiliated native Indians. The British had no qualms disregarding their own written or oral promises in order to extend their rule. Indian mercenaries in the East India Company's miserly pay could not hope to advance in the army, regardless of how loyal they were or how much promise they showed. Previously, there had been numerous examples of high ranking Hindu officials in the government and military of Muslim rulers and vice versa and the sepoys resented the racial and religious discrimination practiced by the British. All this promoted discontent among the Indians. There were over forty major rebellions and many more small uprisings including peasant revolts against their native landlords between 1763 and 1856. Rani Chennamma's battle was one of the major landmarks in our history.

The widespread anger culminated in the "revolt of 1857" which the British tried to belittle, by naming it the sepoy mutiny. The mercenaries of the army were the first to revolt, expressing their anger at the use of cartridges greased with animal fat. The common people went to the help of the dispossessed Nawab Wajid Ali Shah in Oudh. Commoners revolted in other areas as well. Royal leaders who revolted included Nana Sahed Dondu Pant, adopted son of Peshwa Baji Rao (whose commander was Tantya Tope) and Rani Lakshmbai. There were many other heroic figures of the time, including Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur and Maulvi Ahmadullah of Madras, who helped the revolt at Faizabad and participated in battles at Oudh and Rohilkhand. Muslims and Hindus fought side by side, astonishing the British who had convinced themselves that they would never come together.

The rebellion was ruthlessly crushed by the British, who massacred Indians at Allahabad and Benares and killed civilians in villages. The British also tortured both Hindus and Muslims after the revolt in horrifying ways, in an attempt to terrify Indians into submission and acceptance of British rule. After the revolt, India passed from the hands of the East India Company to the British Crown. For a century that followed, it was to be part of the British Empire.

## **The Freedom Struggle**

The Indian freedom struggle was successful because so many men, women and youngsters like Sharan and Kamala took part in it with a full heart. It was also a unique and incredibly civilized struggle, one in which the vast majority of Indians followed Mahatma Gandhi's ideal of non-violence. The bravery and self-discipline among freedom fighters that followed this path is immense. Imagine taking part in a protest, knowing you

will be badly beaten, that you may suffer paralysis (as did G. B. Pant) or even lose your life because of the injuries that you incur (as did Lala Lajpat Rai), and in spite of all this, holding back the urge to hit back, even in self-defense!

The Congress party, to which Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Abdul Kalam Azad and others belonged, was begun with the blessing of the British. This was, however, motivated by selfish interest. The Englishman A. O. Hume asked for official patronage for this party, by pointing out that it would act as a “safety valve” preventing another major revolt from occurring. The British also tried other measures that professed to be benevolent but were not. For example, the Minto-Morley reforms increased the number of elected Indian representatives in the government, but these representatives had no real powers. What was worse, this so-called reform was another attempt to implement the divide and rule policy, by introducing separate electorates based on religion.

The revolt of 1857 had struck terror into the hearts of the British. They had never expected that Indians could or would unite and were determined to do all they could to ensure that this would never happen again. They conducted numerous surveys in order to classify Indians and proceeded to systematically do all they could to intensify existing differences according to their policy of divide and conquer. Indian collaborators were vital for the proper functioning of the British Government. Educated Indians quickly found, however, that the doors to the higher offices remained closed to them. The rampant racial discrimination and arrogance of the Europeans towards native Indians led to resentment and was ultimately a major factor in the rise of nationalism. In the words of Bose, “ the impunity with which they could humiliate, assault or even murder the natives of the county they had conquered served as painful reminders ... of their state of subjugation to an alien rule, however benevolent it otherwise professed ... to be.”

Another major reason for the rise of nationalism was the exploitative governmental policies and indifference of the rulers to the plight of the common people, the deteriorating economy and the increase in poverty. There were many policies that caused the deterioration of the economy. For example, instead of importing salt from Chennai, the empire insisted on importing it from England at incredibly high prices. Artisans in the Madras presidency had to pay taxes levied on trades and professions. Stringent regulations and high taxes caused the collapse of India’s infrastructure, including the textile industry, many arts and crafts and education system.

In 1917, a peaceful protest was led against the government forcing peasants to grow indigo in Champaran, instead of crops that could prevent famine. In 1918, the Kheela Satyagraha was organized when, despite a crop failure in Gujarat, the government insisted on full payment of revenue by the farmers. There were agitations against the Rowlatt act of 1919, which allowed the British to imprison Indians without trial. Then General Dyer committed the massacre in Jallianwalla Bagh, in which unarmed men, women and children were mercilessly shot at until his officers ran out of ammunition. Dyer was honored rather than reprimanded for his atrocities and Gandhiji began his non-cooperation movement. He advocated boycott of elections, foreign goods, schools, colleges and law-courts. Non-cooperation was suspended when there were any reports of violent incidents, but by then, the majority of Indians had understood that peaceful resistance was powerful. In 1947, India gained independence. The two greatest failures of the freedom struggle, however, occurred during the hour of its greatest triumph – the

partition of the country and the ensuing communal violence. Indeed, it is shameful and shocking to see how much ethnic violence there is to this day in a country that set an example to the world by attaining its freedom in a peaceful manner. Let us end with a hope that one day, India will once again become a beacon of peace and that all the countries of the world will come together in the spirit of cooperation rather than competition.