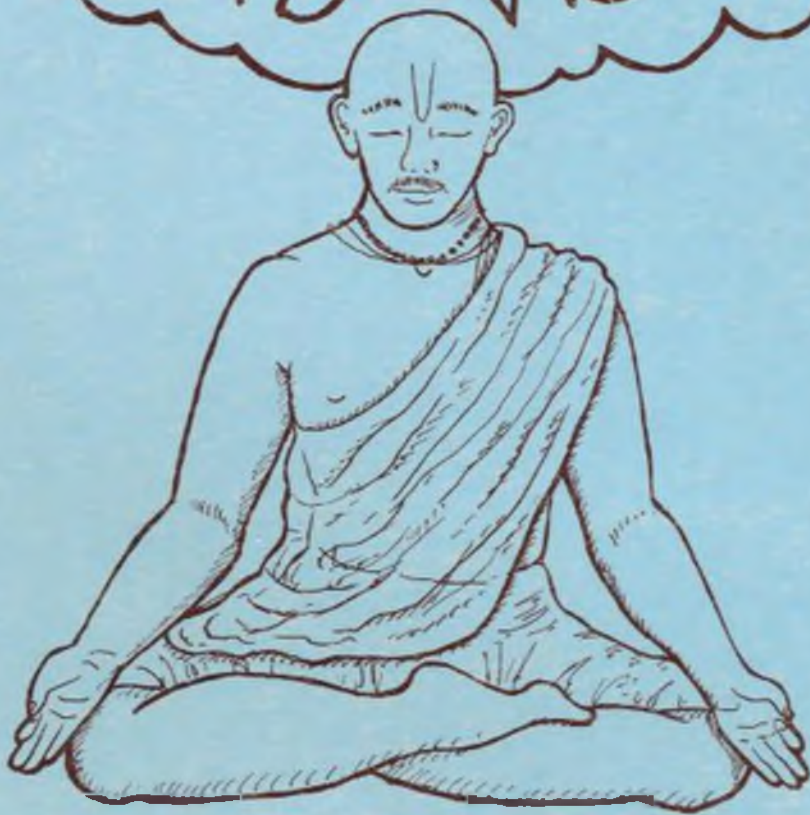


SWEET RICE  
FOR  
LORD VISHNU



Dedicated to His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



Sweet Rice for Lord Vishnu  
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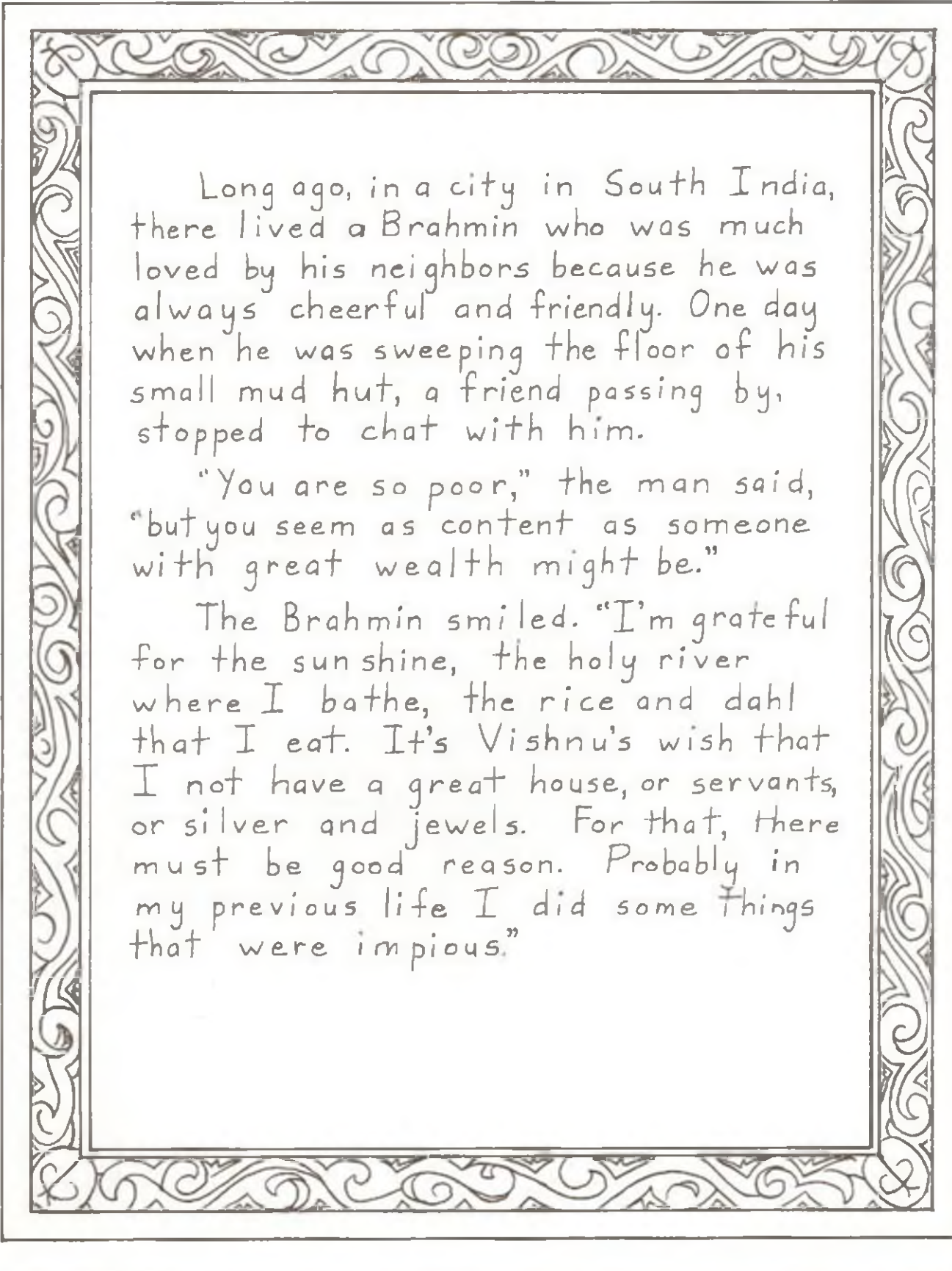


SWEET RICE  
FOR  
LORD VISHNU

Retold by Mary Scioscia

Illustrations and Lettering by  
Loetitia S. Lilot (Saradiya dasi)





Long ago, in a city in South India, there lived a Brahmin who was much loved by his neighbors because he was always cheerful and friendly. One day when he was sweeping the floor of his small mud hut, a friend passing by, stopped to chat with him.

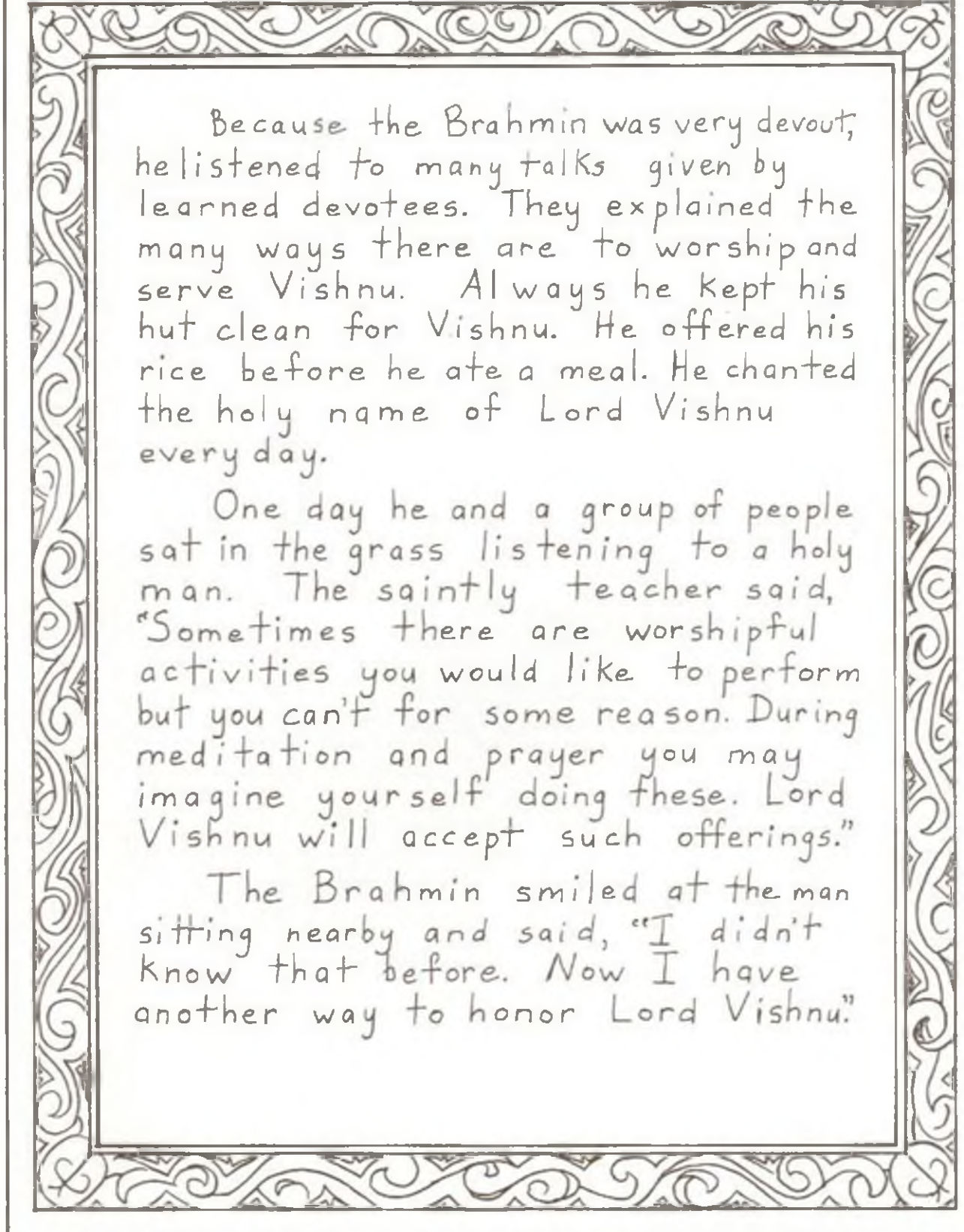
"You are so poor," the man said, "but you seem as content as someone with great wealth might be."

The Brahmin smiled. "I'm grateful for the sunshine, the holy river where I bathe, the rice and dahl that I eat. It's Vishnu's wish that I not have a great house, or servants, or silver and jewels. For that, there must be good reason. Probably in my previous life I did some things that were impious."







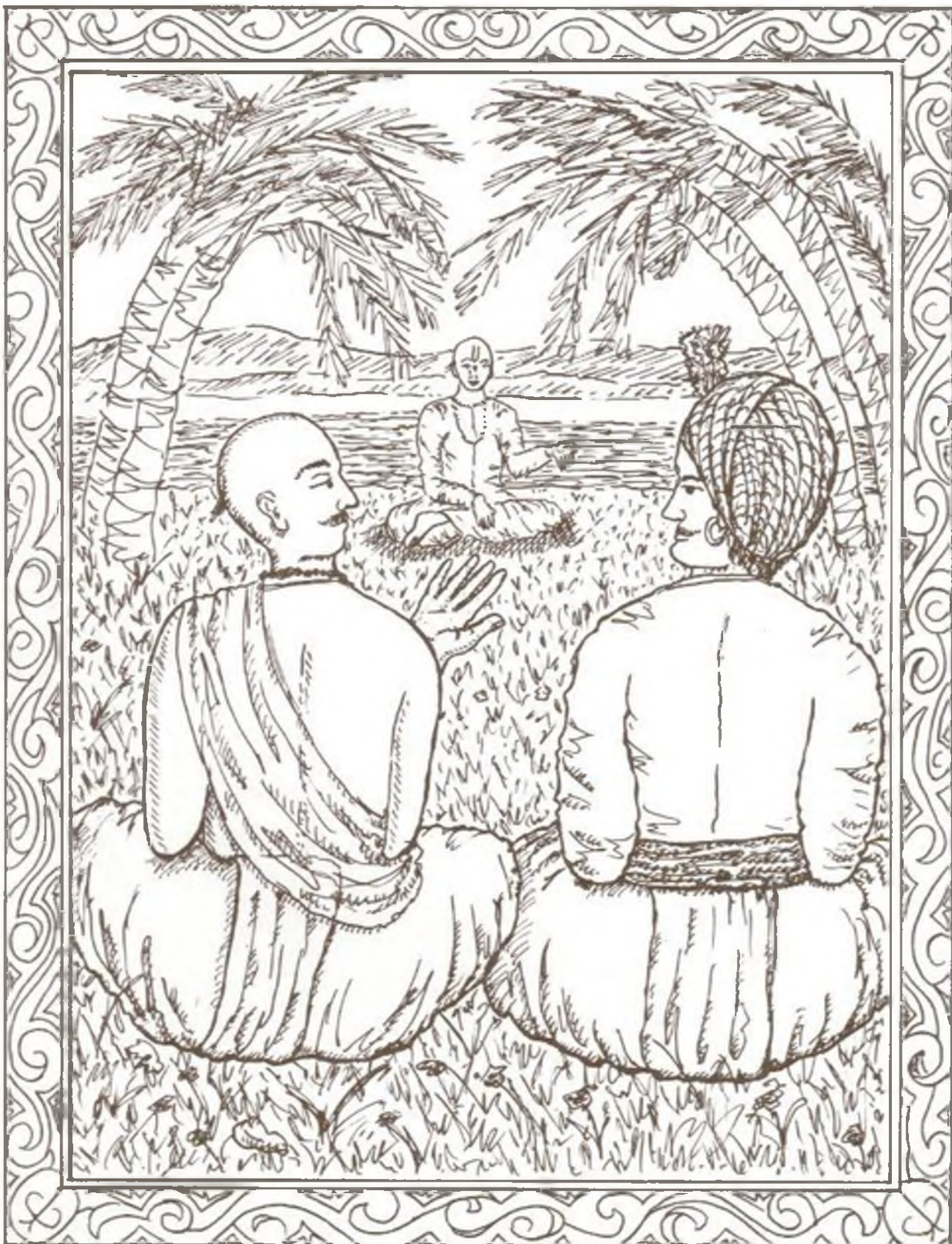


Because the Brahmin was very devout, he listened to many talks given by learned devotees. They explained the many ways there are to worship and serve Vishnu. Always he kept his hut clean for Vishnu. He offered his rice before he ate a meal. He chanted the holy name of Lord Vishnu every day.

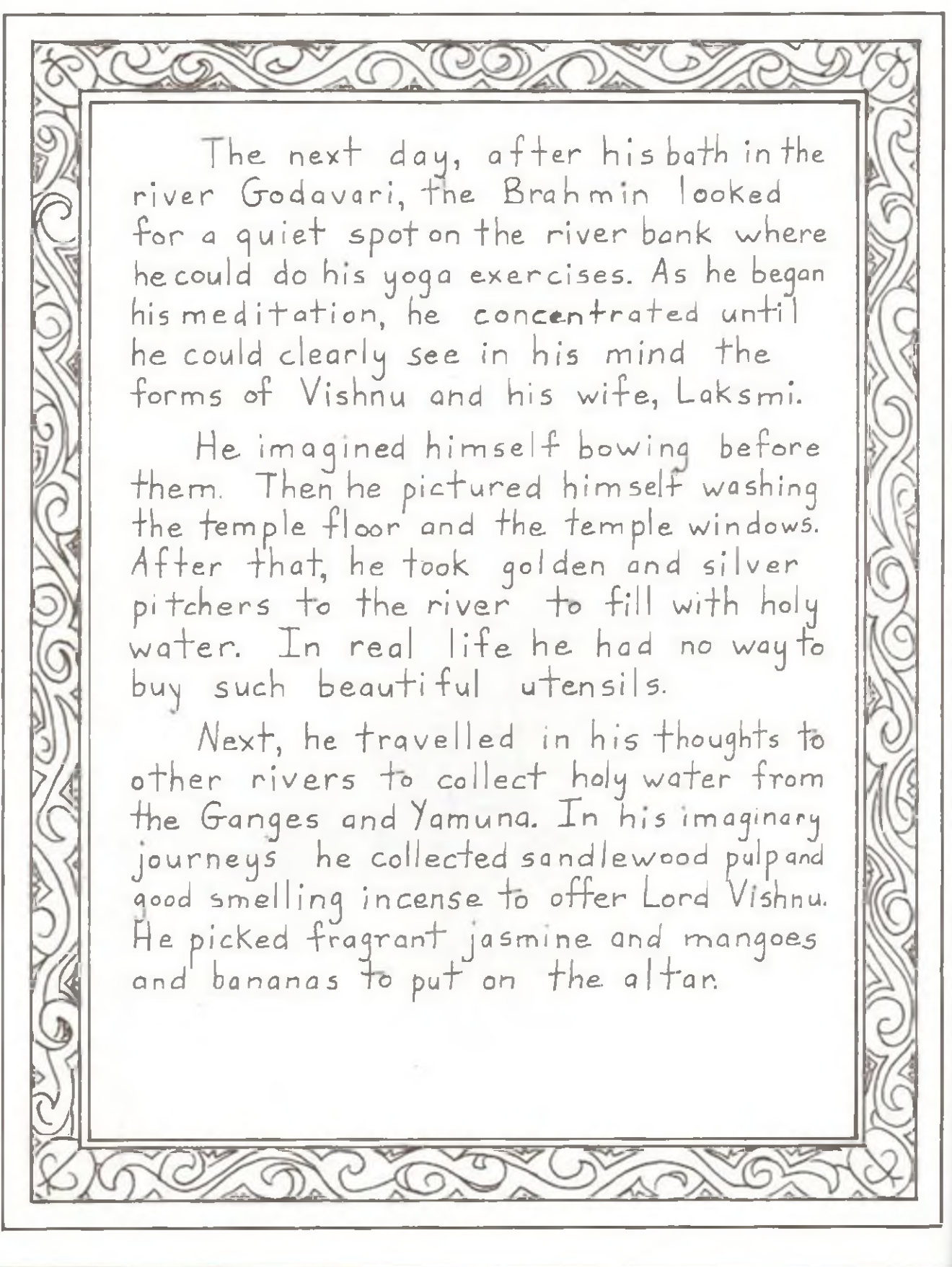
One day he and a group of people sat in the grass listening to a holy man. The saintly teacher said, "Sometimes there are worshipful activities you would like to perform but you can't for some reason. During meditation and prayer you may imagine yourself doing these. Lord Vishnu will accept such offerings."

The Brahmin smiled at the man sitting nearby and said, "I didn't know that before. Now I have another way to honor Lord Vishnu."







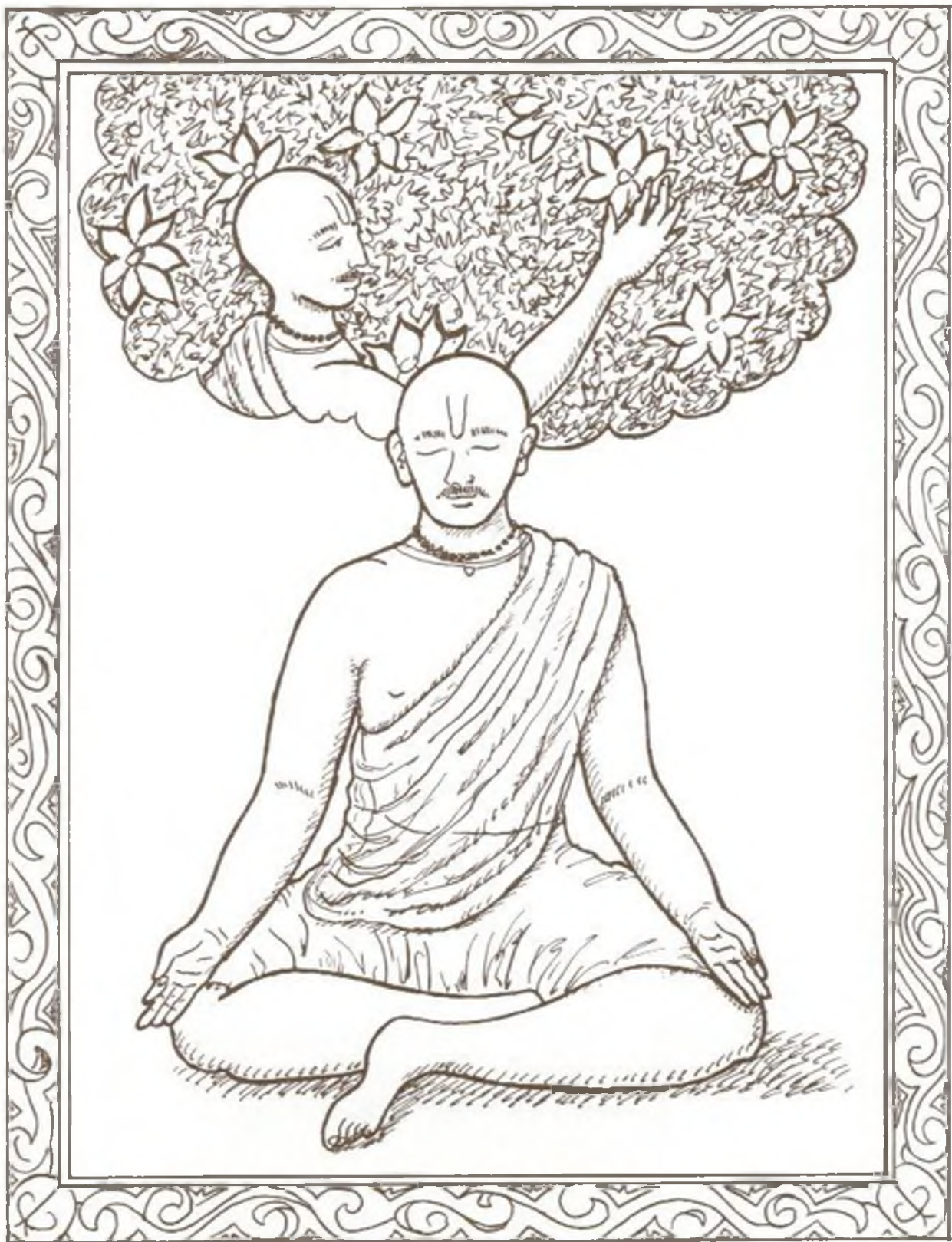


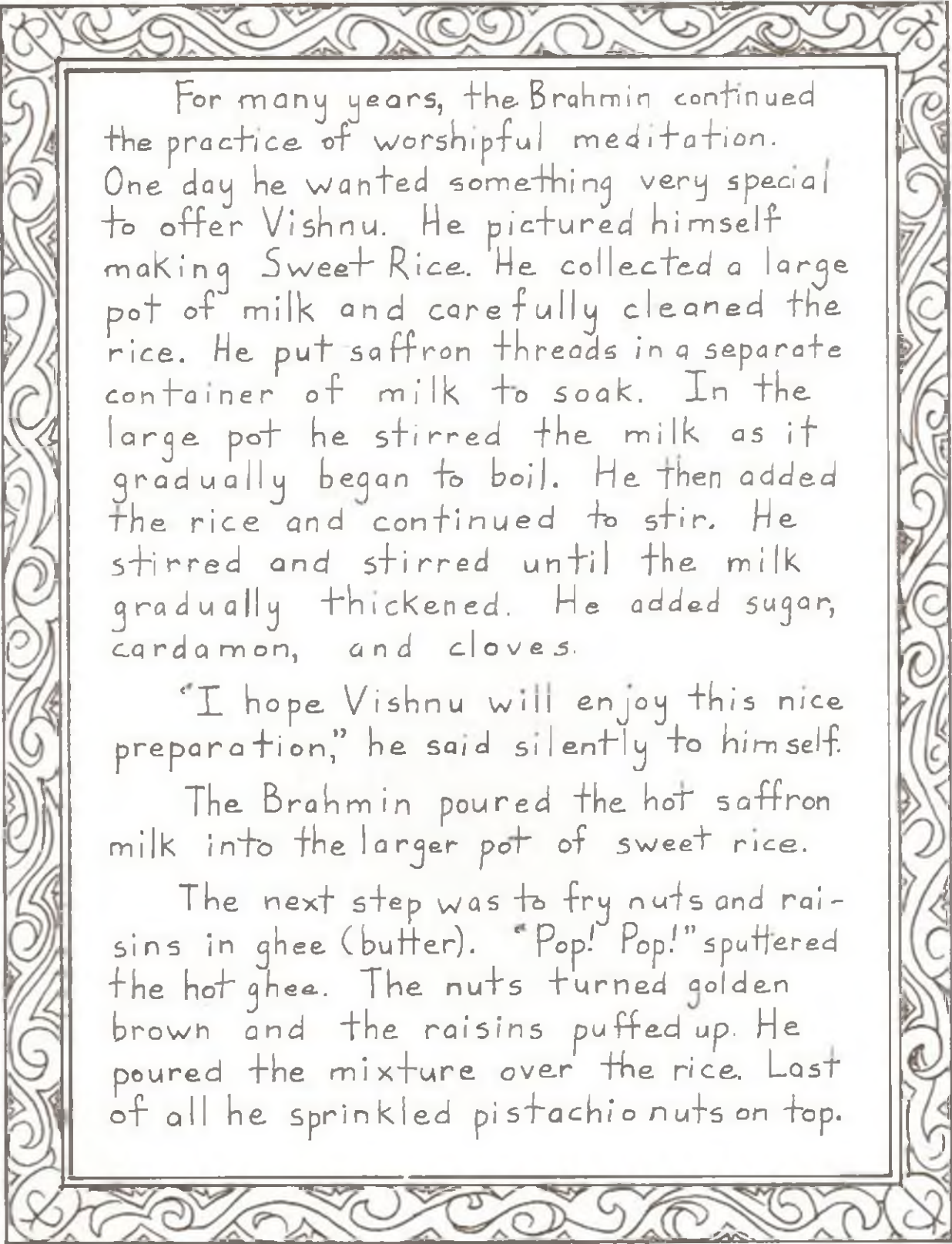
The next day, after his bath in the river Godavari, the Brahmin looked for a quiet spot on the river bank where he could do his yoga exercises. As he began his meditation, he concentrated until he could clearly see in his mind the forms of Vishnu and his wife, Lakshmi.

He imagined himself bowing before them. Then he pictured himself washing the temple floor and the temple windows. After that, he took golden and silver pitchers to the river to fill with holy water. In real life he had no way to buy such beautiful utensils.

Next, he travelled in his thoughts to other rivers to collect holy water from the Ganges and Yamuna. In his imaginary journeys he collected sandalwood pulp and good smelling incense to offer Lord Vishnu. He picked fragrant jasmine and mangoes and bananas to put on the altar.







For many years, the Brahmin continued the practice of worshipful meditation. One day he wanted something very special to offer Vishnu. He pictured himself making Sweet Rice. He collected a large pot of milk and carefully cleaned the rice. He put saffron threads in a separate container of milk to soak. In the large pot he stirred the milk as it gradually began to boil. He then added the rice and continued to stir. He stirred and stirred until the milk gradually thickened. He added sugar, cardamon, and cloves.

"I hope Vishnu will enjoy this nice preparation," he said silently to himself.

The Brahmin poured the hot saffron milk into the larger pot of sweet rice.

The next step was to fry nuts and raisins in ghee (butter). "Pop! Pop!" sputtered the hot ghee. The nuts turned golden brown and the raisins puffed up. He poured the mixture over the rice. Last of all he sprinkled pistachio nuts on top.





"It has to cool to taste best," thought the Brahmin. "I must wait." After a few minutes he thought, "It's probably cool enough now."

He reached out to test the rice with his finger.

"Ouch!" he exclaimed, and pulled his hand back. Astonished, he came out of his meditation, and examined the tiny red spot on his finger.

"I don't understand," muttered the Brahmin. "It's only a small burn and hardly hurts. But how could I get a real burn when I was only imagining that I cooked the Sweet Rice for Lord Vishnu?"











Meanwhile, far away  
in the spiritual realm  
of Vaikuntha, Vishnu  
and Lakshmi saw  
what happened  
to the Brahmin  
and they  
smiled at  
each other.

One of  
their attend-  
ants asked,  
"What made  
you both  
smile just  
now?"







They didn't reply. Instead, Vishnu ordered a spiritual air plane to fetch the Brahmin.





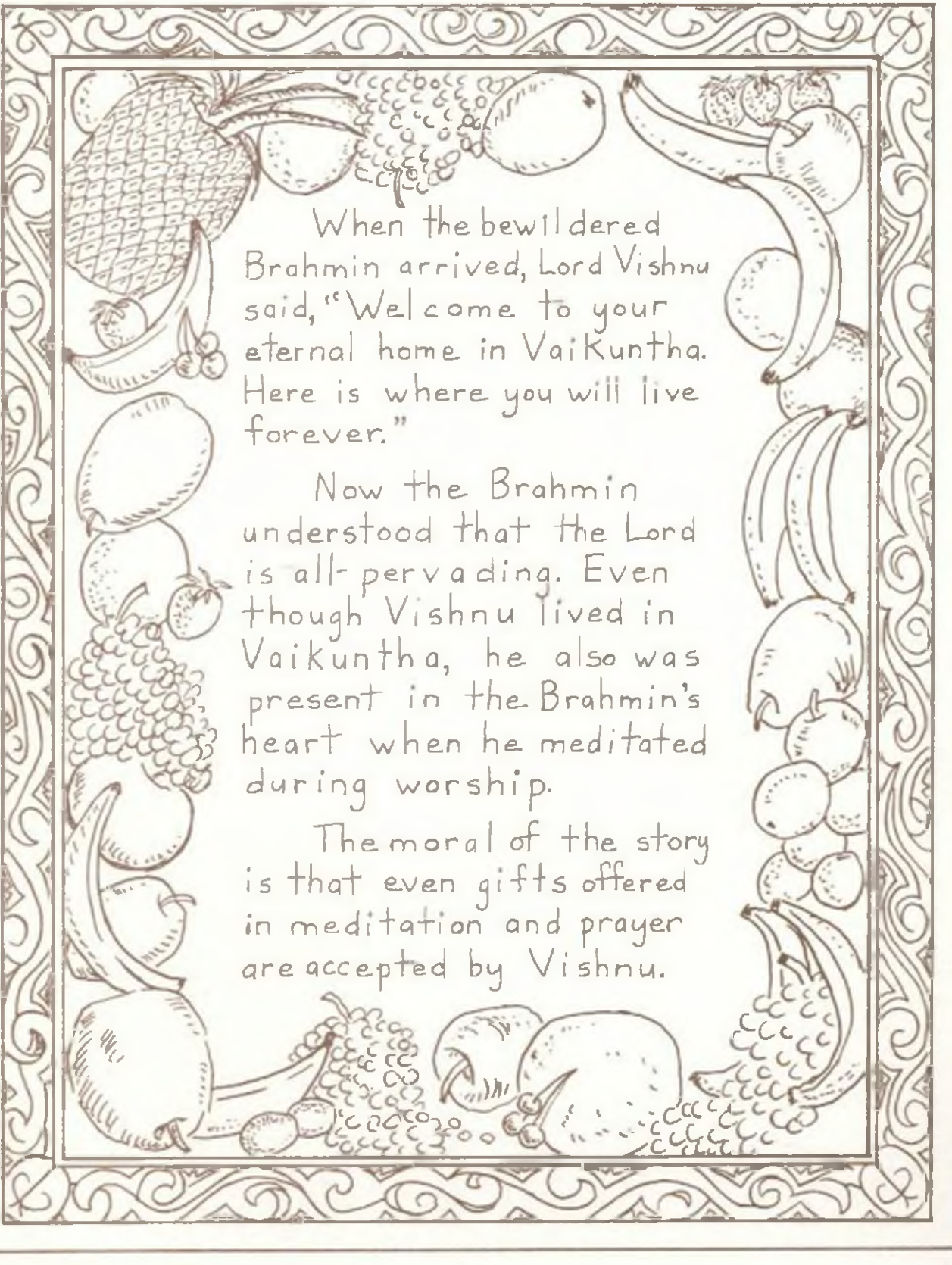


By Anand Das









When the bewildered Brahmin arrived, Lord Vishnu said, "Welcome to your eternal home in Vaikuntha. Here is where you will live forever."

Now the Brahmin understood that the Lord is all-pervading. Even though Vishnu lived in Vaikuntha, he also was present in the Brahmin's heart when he meditated during worship.

The moral of the story is that even gifts offered in meditation and prayer are accepted by Vishnu.





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