

## **Incarnation Six**

### **Parashuram – The Warrior**

Long ago there lived in the forest a brahmin priest called, Jamadagni. He was very religious and had seven sons, headed by Parashuram. He also possessed a wish-fulfilling cow called Kamadhenu. This magical animal could give one whatever one desired. Still, as a true brahmin, Jamadagni lived very simply in his humble cottage.

One day Parashuram was away from home. King Arjuna, who was travelling through the forest with his army, came upon the hermitage. As is the custom in India, Jamadagni happily received the king and his army as his guests. With the help of Kamadhenu, he offered a huge feast to the king and his men.

Instead of being grateful, however, the greedy king stole the cow and left for his capital.

Shortly afterwards Parashuram returned. Hearing of the theft, He became as angry as a trampled snake. Dressed in a black deerskin and with matted locks of hair, He took his axe and shield and was fearful to behold. He pursued the wicked king, apprehending the army as they approached the city's gates. There followed a terrible battle. Wherever Parashuram whirled His axe, severed arms, legs and heads tumbled to the ground. As he killed men, horses and elephants, the ground became muddy with their blood. Parashuram challenged the king. He chopped off His arms and, with a final swing of His axe, lopped off the king's head.

Happily returning home with Kamadhenu, Parashuram told his father everything. But Jamadagni was not pleased in the slightest. "My son," he said, "You have sinned by killing the Emperor, the protector of the citizens. The duty of a brahmin is to develop the qualities of forgiveness. The Supreme Lord is pleased with those who are forgiving."

Parashuram felt sorry and repented his foolishness. To atone for his sin he set off on a pilgrimage. After one year of visiting the holy places, he again returned home.

One day Parashuram and his brothers were in the woods near the hermitage. The sons of Arjuna, seeking revenge for their father's death, stealthily approached the cottage. Seeing Jamadagni seated alone in meditation, they crept up from behind and chopped off his head, carrying it away. Parashuram and his brothers, hearing their mother's screams, rushed back to their home. Overcome with grief and anger, they cried over their father's body. With eyes blazing Parashuram again took up his axe and pursued the murderers to their capital.

In the midst of that city he created a mountain of heads severed from the bodies of King Arjuna's sons. The ghastly river of their blood flowed throughout the entire land, bringing fear to the hearts of all kings who disrespected the brahmins.

Because the rulers remained sinful for over twenty-one generations, Parashuram killed them all. From their blood he created nine lakes, which later became filled with water. Today many Hindus go there on pilgrimage and bathe there, remembering how the government should always respect the brahmins.