

The blind man and the Buddha

A Buddhist story

Key ideas: the Buddha, friendship, patience, the wonder of colour, healing

Ravi had been blind all his life. He had never seen the sun, or the moon, or the stars. He did not know that the sky was blue or that the grass was green. He did not know what a tree looked like, and could not even begin to imagine what shape and colours a bird might be.

His family and friends would say to him “The sun is shining brightly today,” or “There are thousands of stars in the sky tonight.” Ravi could not see them. He would become angry. He often said “There is no sun. There are no stars.” People felt sad because Ravi was so unhappy. They told him that even though he could not see them, the sun and stars were still there.

Sometimes people would talk to Ravi about the beautiful colours of nature, but he did not listen. One day his sisters were talking. They were trying to decide what colour saris they should wear for a wedding. One said she would wear red, the other preferred yellow.

“What does it matter,” shouted Ravi angrily, “There is no such thing as colour.” Everything is dark. The colours are only in your mind.”

Slowly people stopped talking to Ravi about the things they could see. They knew it would only make him cross. Then one day, when Ravi was twenty, his family and friends heard of a man who might be able to help Ravi. He was called the Buddha. People who had met him said he could make people walk who had never walked before and he could make blind people see.

His family and friends took Ravi to the Buddha. Ravi was not quite sure what was going to happen but he was not afraid. The Buddha gently soothed Ravi’s eyes with four different lotions and suddenly, he was able to see. He knew that the sun and the stars shone in the sky. He saw how beautiful the colours of nature were. He marvelled at the trees and birds around him and he saw his sisters in their richly coloured saris.

He was amazed.