

Sudhama and Krishna

A Hindu story

Key ideas: friendship, loyalty, kindness

To protect the baby Krishna from his wicked uncle who was king, Krishna was taken to some farmers in the country. They brought him up as their own son, so Krishna grew up looking after cattle, milking them and playing with all the village boys and girls.

There was one boy, Sudhama who was not as strong as the others, but whom Krishna specially loved. They often went out together and Krishna, who was strong, was able to help his friend. When they grew up and the wicked king had died, Krishna became king, left the country to live in the palace, married and seldom saw his old friend.

Sudhama married as well, but as he was not strong and could not work hard, they were very poor. One day his wife said to him, 'You have a friend who is now king, and is very rich. Go and see him and ask for help'. Sudhama wanted to see his friend, but he did not want to go begging for help. His wife kept urging him and at last because he wanted to see his friend, he gave in.

Whenever you go to visit a friend in India it is the custom to take a small present, just a little loving gift, sweets or a few flowers, but Sudhama looked everywhere but could find nothing, only a few grains of poha, what we call rice crispies.

At first the servants at the door of the king's palace could not believe that so poor a man was the friend of the king and refused to let him in but Krishna, who was sitting on the throne in the audience room, looked down the hall. Perhaps he had heard his friend's voice. He recognised his friend, left his throne and walked across the hall to the door to welcome him.

Overjoyed to meet again the friends sat side by side on the wide thrones and talked of all the happy times they remembered when they were young. Sudhama gave Krishna his little gift as he was leaving at the end of the day but never thought of asking for his help. He returned to his wife after a very happy day but worried lest she would be angry with him for not asking Krishna for help.

When he returned to his village he could not find his little cottage, but he saw his smiling wife standing on the steps of the verandah of a well built house that had store rooms filled with grain, spices and vegetables and all that he needed. With thankfulness and joy Sudhama knew that a real friend knew of his needs without having to ask.