

BHAGAVATAM – Krishna Leelas 9

Krishna and Sudama



Remember the last lesson? Krishna killed Kamsa, and the citizens of Mathura were released from the tyranny of Kamsa's reign. They started living happily in peace and prosperity. Krishna and Balarama decided to stay at Mathura with their parents, Vasudeva and Devaki. Nanda and the gopas bade them good-bye and returned to Brindavan with heavy hearts, missing their dear friends Krishna and Balarama. Then a new phase of Krishna and Balarama's lives started.

Krishna's father Vasudeva felt that it was time for Krishna and Balarama to get a formal education. He decided to send Krishna and Balarama to Rishi Sandipani's Gurukul for their education. In ancient times, young boys would be sent to live with a great teacher to learn. It was called a gurukul. They were required to live in the ashram (home) of their Guru and do service to the teacher during the entire period of their studies. Krishna and Balarama were the perfect students. Rishi Sandipani would give a lesson, and they immediately memorized and understood it.

Another boy, Sudama, was studying with them. All three became very close friends. They used to do all the activities together. One day, the guru-patni (teacher's wife) asked Krishna, Sudama, and Balarama to get firewood from the forest. At the gurukul, the students would work as well as study. As they were leaving, she called Sudama back and said, "Here, take this bundle, I have packed some groundnuts for all of you to eat if you get hungry."

Walking around in the forest, picking dry twigs and chopping firewood from fallen dead trees, the three boys got very tired. They decided to rest a while. As Sudama was weaker than them, his friends did not let him exert too much and so he was less tired than the other two. Balarama and Krishna soon fell asleep, Krishna with his head on Sudama's lap. After a while, Sudama became impatient to eat the groundnuts given by the guru-patni; he could not wait for the others to wake up. He started eating them. The sound of the munching penetrated Krishna's sleep and he asked, "What is the sound I hear?" Sudama replied, "It is only my teeth chattering due to the cold." He did not want Krishna to know that he had not shared the groundnuts. Of course, Lord Krishna knew the truth.

Krishna and Sudama went back to their respective places after the completion of education at Gurukul. Sudama got married with Kalyani, and had many children. Later in life, Sudama became very poor, and he didn't even have proper clothes to wear. It was hard for him to provide for even the basic needs to his family. But, he still led a contented life with intense devotion to Krishna. He could not forget his extraordinary friend even after many years.

Day by day Sudama's family position worsened. Kalynai couldn't bear looking at her starving children. She gently reproached her husband and said, "Lord Krishna, master of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, is your friend. To those who love and worship Him sincerely, He gives His very own self. If you approach Him, will He not give you a few things to keep you out of this misery of starvation?" Sudama heard but paid no heed. Every now and then his wife would remind him of the glories of the Lord and would ask him to approach Him for help. After many such reminders, Sudama decided to go and pay a visit to Krishna. He thought if nothing else, he would at least enjoy meeting his old friend again.

Sudama asked his wife to give him some gift to take to his friend. She remembered that Sudama would say that Krishna loved flattened rice. She begged three handfuls of flattened rice flakes from the neighbors, and bundled in an old torn piece of cloth. Sudama happily started off on his journey by walk to Dwaraka, where Krishna and Balarama were then living. All along the way he thought of Krishna, and reminisced about their times together. He wondered whether Krishna would remember him? When he reached Dwaraka, his eyes widened with wonder looking at the beautiful and stunning city. He passed through the city gates and came before Krishna's palace. He requested the guards to send a message to the king that his friend, Sudama, from the Gurukul of Sandipani Rishi, had come to meet him.

But, Krishna saw Sudama from a distance and ran down the steps to greet him. He was overjoyed to see his old friend again. He embraced Sudama lovingly and led him into the palace. Krishna's eyes were filled with tears to see this old, devoted friend of his. He seated Sudama on His own royal seat, washed his tired feet and gave him refreshment, while Rukmini, Krishna's wife, fanned him. All the servants of palace wondered why the Lord gave such special treatment to a ragged old Brahmin.

The classmates then walked down memory lane, recalling the sweet times they had spent together at the Gurukulam. Sudama suddenly remembered the flattened rice, but was ashamed to offer something so meager to a great person. Then Krishna teasingly asked him if he had brought him any gift. Krishna was well aware of the small packet of flattened rice flakes that Sudama brought for him, and also knew that he felt shy to give it to Him. He said, "Whatever My devotees give Me with real love, that gift is extremely dear to Me." Yet Sudama felt shy. So Krishna searched him and grabbed the little bag of humble gift from his upper garment. He opened the packet and ate a handful of flattened rice. With great appreciation, Krishna said, "Sudama, you remembered that I love flattened rice! This indeed is the tastiest thing I have ever eaten! And you hid it from Me? Truly it will please the three worlds!" And he took another mouthful. When Krishna was ready to eat the third handful, Rukmini caught his hand, and

whispered in His ear, “Natha! Two handfuls are enough. With one handful, you have given Sudama so much wealth that is more than sufficient in this life, and with other handful, you gave him moksha, the eternal bliss, after this life. So, there is nothing else to give. But if you eat the third handful, you and all your subjects would become permanent servants to him. So, please stop.”

Sudama spent that night happily with his friend in His palace. Next morning, he bade his friend an affectionate farewell. Krishna went with him part of the way. His heart was now filled with bliss for having met his Lord, and also for seeing that Krishna had not forgotten him. Then a thought struck him! “Oh my goodness! My wife sent me to ask him for some wealth! I was so lost in love at seeing him that I completely forgot to ask for anything!!!!” Then he thought, “Oh well. What if the Lord did not give me any material benefits? I am happy in the love of my Lord. He treated me more than like a brother. Perhaps He does not want me to have wealth, lest I should forget Him.” He was simply happy thinking about Krishna and His sweetness. With such thoughts, he walked back to his village joyfully.

When he reached his house, he couldn’t recognize his little hut. So transformed it was! In its place was a magnificent huge mansion made of gold, with many guards and ponds. Sudama thought this was a wrong place that he had come to, that he had lost his way somewhere on the road. He turned around to go. Suddenly, he heard his wife and children calling him from the mansion. He knew then that this was Krishna’s Leela. The Lord had bestowed great wealth on Sudama without him asking for it, simply because of His friend’s selfless devotion and love. Sudama offered praise to the Lord. Thereafter he, and his wife lived a pure life, avoiding excesses in spite of their wealth. They meditated upon the Lord constantly, and ultimately attained the State of His Supreme Being.

Questions:

- 1) How do you think Krishna and Balarama’s lives changed when they moved from Brindavan to Mathura?
- 2) Has anyone else had big changes in their lives?
- 3) What was a gurukul? Was it like modern education?
- 4) Were Krishna and Balarama good students? Why?
- 5) Did Sudama think of Krishna after leaving the Gurukul?
- 6) Who convinced Sudama to visit Krishna? Why?
- 7) What are the problems associated with being very poor?
- 8) Did Krishna remember Sudama?
- 9) What did Sudama’s wife send to Krishna? How did she get it?
- 10) When seeing and spending time with Krishna, did Sudama remember why he came?

- 11) How many mouthfuls of pounded rice did Krishna take? What did his wife Rukmini tell him?
- 12) What was Krishna, God or a man? Or both?
- 13) Good and bad happens to us because of our own action (karma). Do you think Sudama ever did anything that might have caused him to be so poor?
- 14) What did Sudama forget to ask Krishna for?
- 15) What did Sudama find when he got home?
- 16) What two gifts did Krishna give Sudama and his wife?
- 17) Most Kings when they get a lot of wealth, do they remember the poor people like Sudama they met a long time ago? Yes or no? Why or why not? Why was Krishna different? Who is Krishna?

MahaLakshmi Ashtakam

**Namstestu Mahamaye Shripithe Surapujite
SankhaChakra GadhaHaste MahaLakshmi Namostute (1)**

**Namaste Garudarudhe Dolasura Bhayankari
SarvaPapaHare Devi MahaLakshmi Namostute (2)**

**Sarvajne Sarvavarade SarvadáshtaBhayankari
Sarvadásukhahare Devi Mahalakshmi Namostute (3)**

**SidhiBudhiPrade Devi BhuktiMukti Pradayini
Mantramurte Sada Devi Mhalakshmi Nmostute (4)**

**AdyantaRahite Devi AdiShakti Maheshwari
Yogaje yogaSambhute MahaLakshmi Namostute (5)**

**SthulaSukshme MahaRaudre MahaShakti Mahodari
MahaPapaHare Devi MahaLakshmi Namostute (6)**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5Pg1RoMJP4>

Jumble Words – All words are from this lesson

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R W A E

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H E T T E

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Coloring exercise

