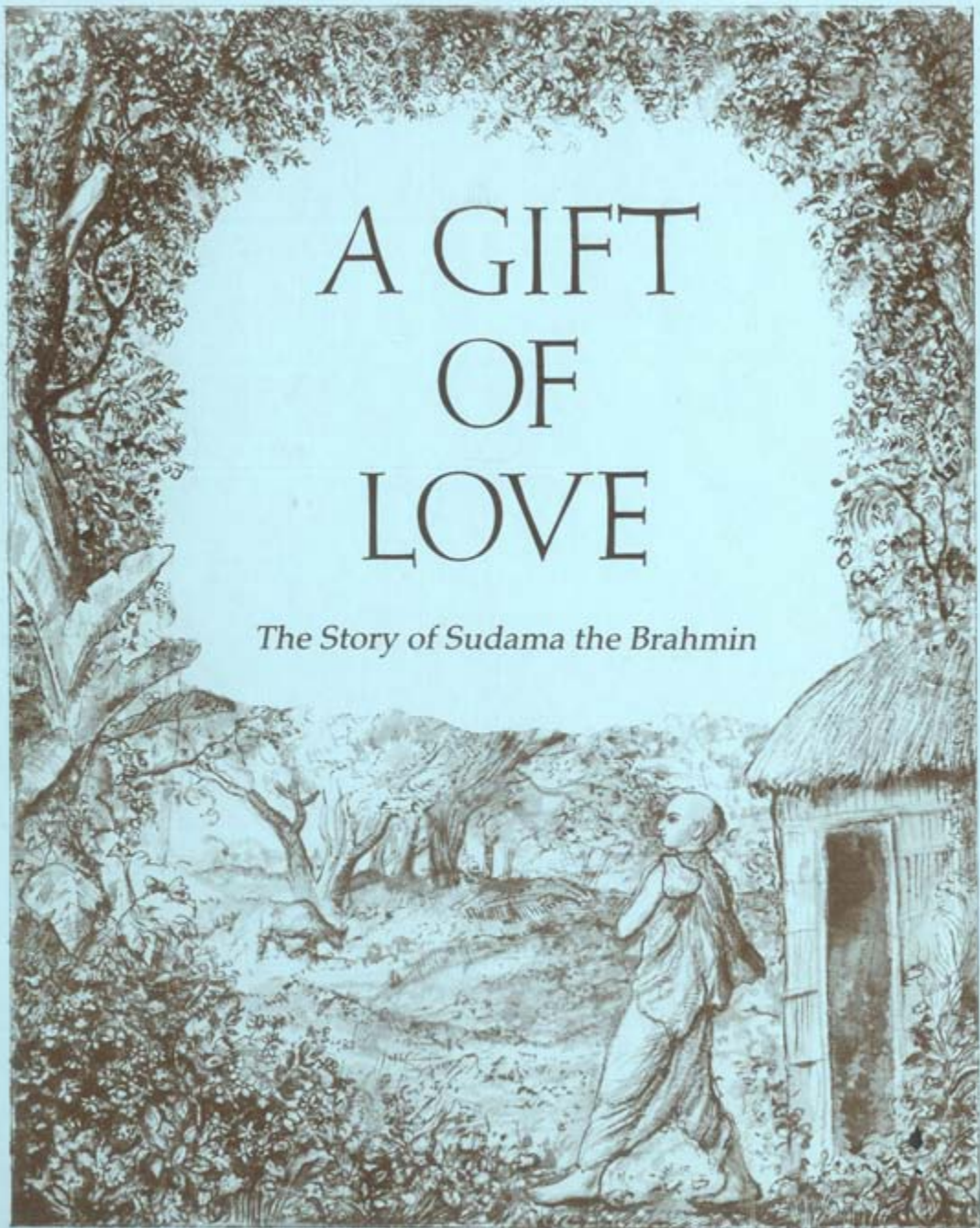


A GIFT OF LOVE

The Story of Sudama the Brahmin





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The Story of Sudama the Brahmin

adapted from the writings of
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda

by Yogeśvara dāsa and Jyotirmayī-devī dāsi
illustrations by Puškāra dāsa

*Dedicated to Śrīla Prabhupāda
whose example from childhood of loving devotion
to Lord Krishna inspires people young and old
to dedicate themselves to His service.*

A Gift of Love:

The Story of Sudama the Brahmin

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A gift of love.

Summary: When a poor Brahmin visits his childhood friend Krishna who has become the King, all he can afford to bring as a gift is a modest packet of chipped rice.

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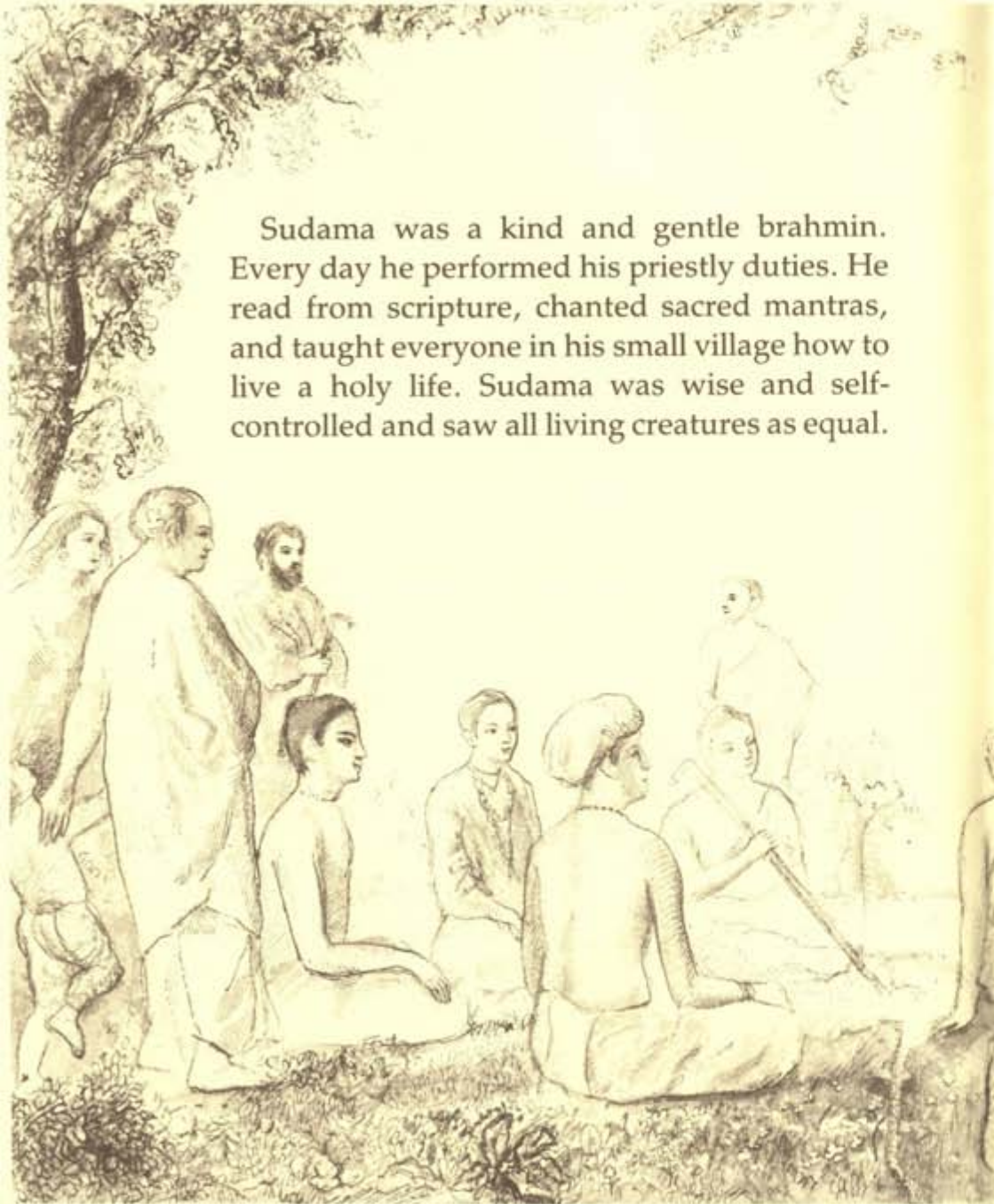
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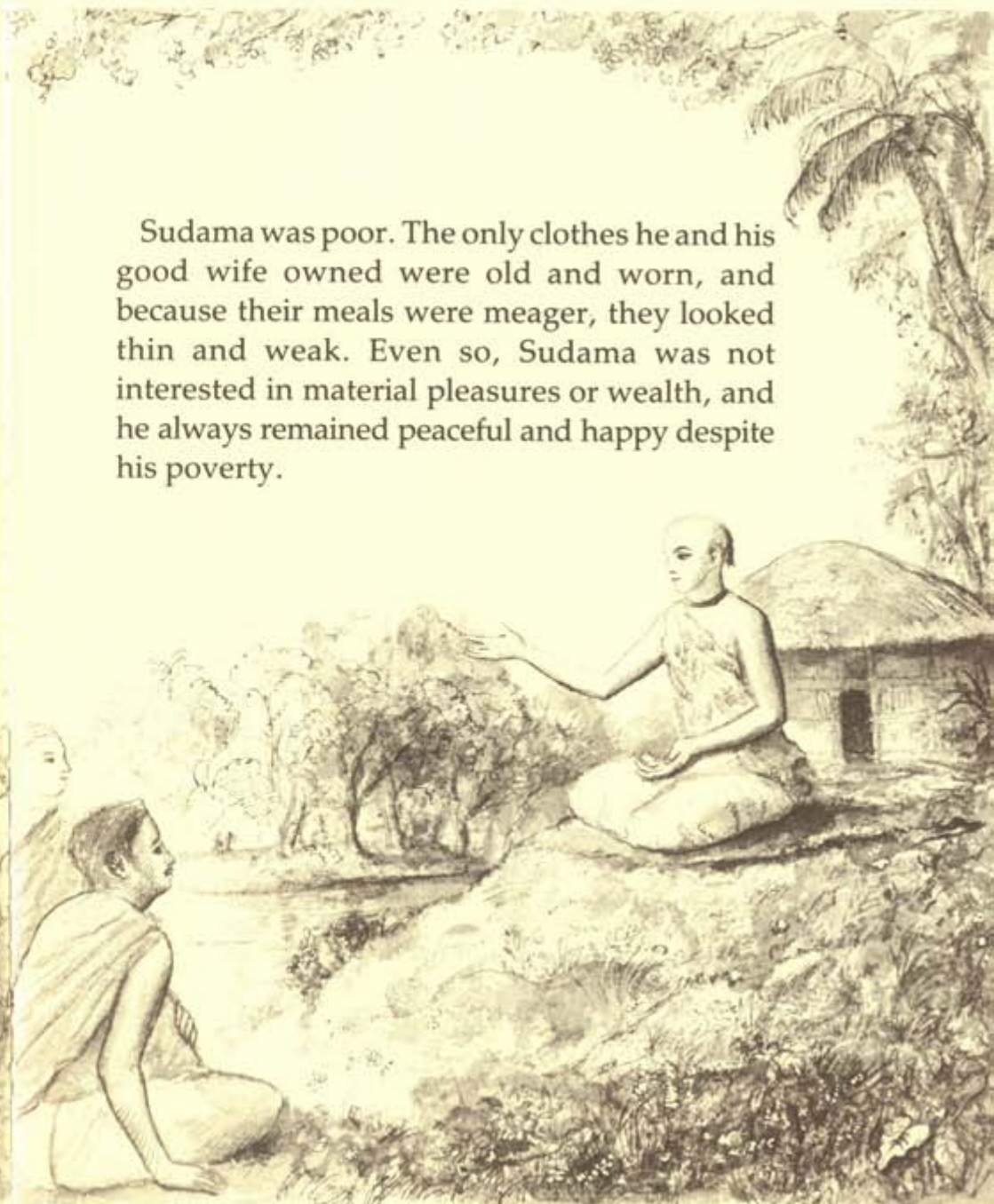
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Thousands of years ago, in a land we now call India, saintly men called brahmins guided society. They helped others in their search for truth and devoted every word, thought, and deed to the service of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Sudama was a kind and gentle brahmin. Every day he performed his priestly duties. He read from scripture, chanted sacred mantras, and taught everyone in his small village how to live a holy life. Sudama was wise and self-controlled and saw all living creatures as equal.



Sudama was poor. The only clothes he and his good wife owned were old and worn, and because their meals were meager, they looked thin and weak. Even so, Sudama was not interested in material pleasures or wealth, and he always remained peaceful and happy despite his poverty.

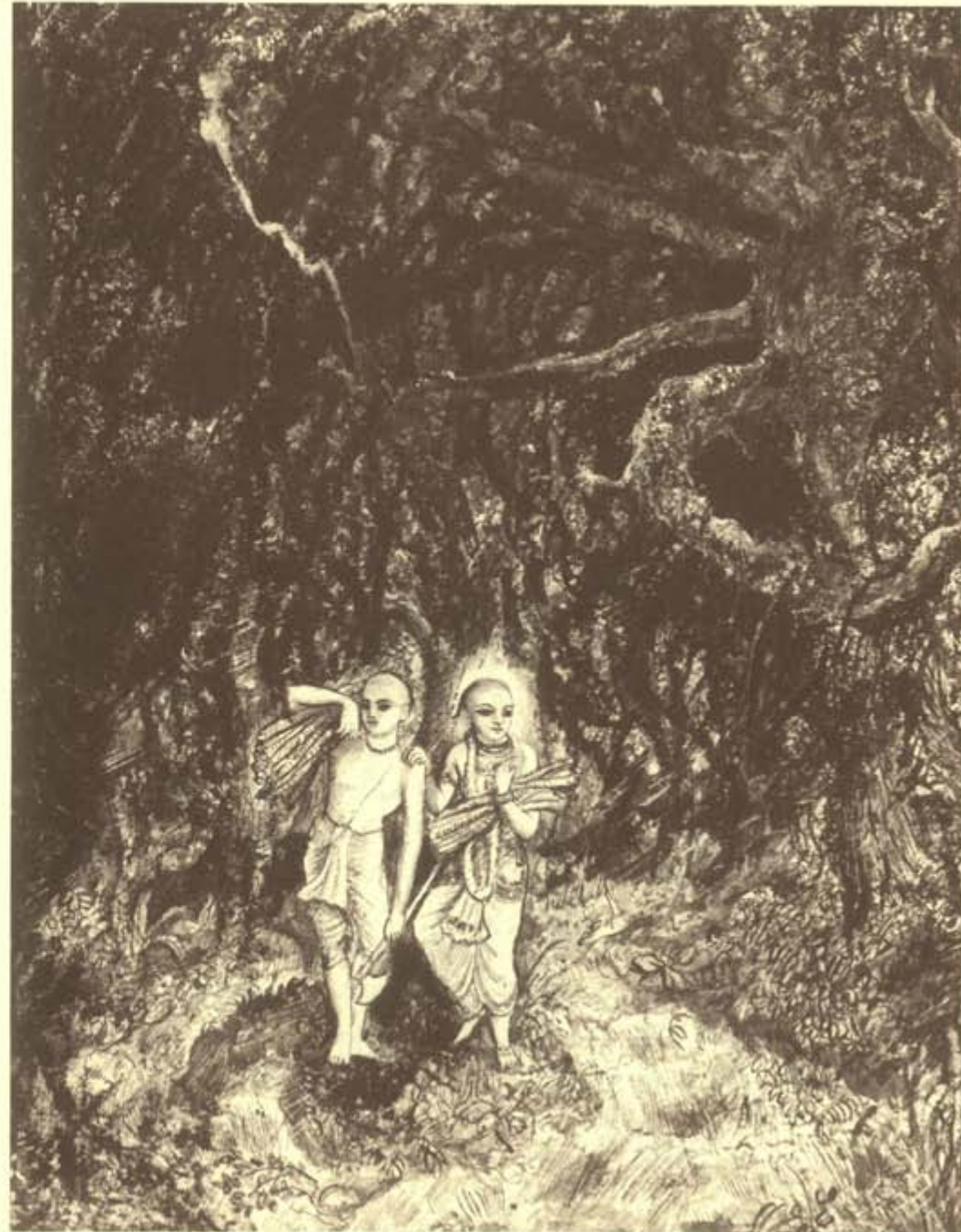


Sudama's wife, however, worried about her husband's health. "Dear Sudama," she said one day, "I am very concerned for your well-being. Please go to Lord Krishna. You are very fortunate to have Him as your friend. Lord Krishna is now King of Dwarka, but as children you attended the same school. Surely He knows how devoted you are to Him and to instructing others about spiritual life. If you ask, He will not hesitate to help you obtain the bare necessities of life."

Sudama was not anxious to ask Lord Krishna for any personal favors. "Still," he thought, "if I go to Dwarka I shall see my dear friend again. That would be wonderful." So he agreed to his wife's plan and asked her to prepare a gift for him to bring. His wife collected four palmfuls of chipped rice from their neighbors and tied it in a small cloth. It was a humble gift. It was all they had. Sudama took the cloth and left at once for the royal city of Dwarka.



As he walked, Sudama remembered childhood adventures with his friend Krishna. They were once classmates in the Gurukula school of Sandipani Muni, a wise and learned teacher. One day, Krishna and Sudama went to the forest to collect firewood for their guru, and by chance they became lost. A dust storm covered the sky. Thunder exploded, and rain fell so hard that the road became flooded. Lord Krishna, acting like an ordinary child, took his friend Sudama's hand in great distress, and together they passed the night searching for the way home.





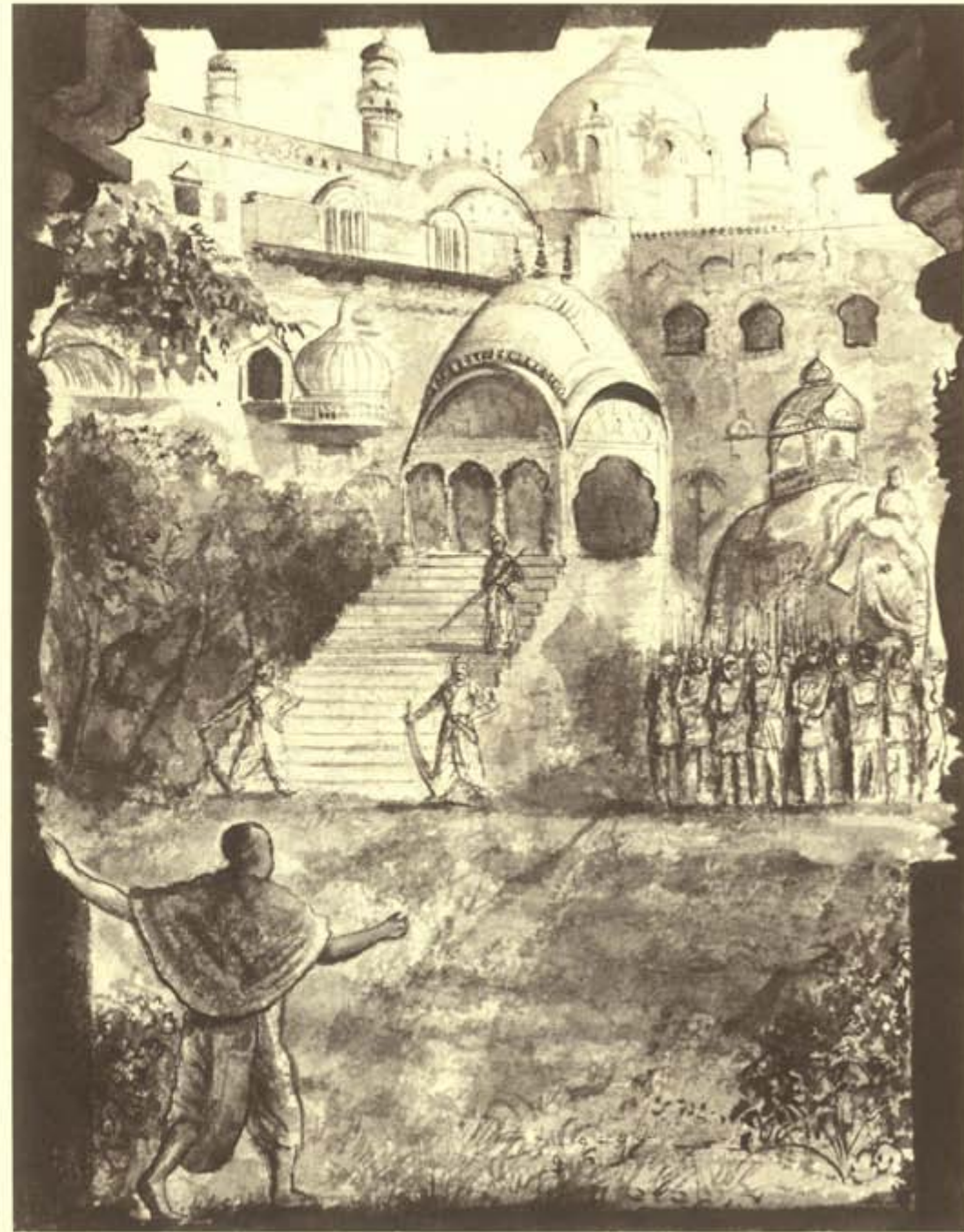
Sandipani Muni came with his other students to look for the two boys and at last found them in the jungle.

"My dear boys," he said, "you have suffered so much trouble just for me. This is proof of how serious you are to serve your spiritual master. I bless you both. May all your desires be fulfilled and may you always remember the teachings of the scriptures. Thus you will be happy both in this life and the next."

Remembering these events, Sudama marveled at Krishna's humility. "He is the source of all knowledge," Sudama thought, "and yet He accepted a spiritual master and went to school just to set an example for children everywhere."



Soon Sudama arrived at Dwarka. He passed through large gates and beautiful gardens protected by military guards. He walked beneath the arches of regal palaces and then came to the most splendid palace of all. Inside, Lord Krishna was enjoying the company of His beautiful queen, Rukmini. As soon as Sudama arrived, Krishna came forward to embrace him with great affection.



Krishna invited Sudama to sit on His own bed and brought him fruits and sweet drinks. He washed Sudama's feet and sprinkled the water on His own head as a sign of great respect. Then He applied sandalwood paste to Sudama's body to cool him after his journey. All the while, Queen Rukmini fanned Sudama with a yak-tail fan.

Krishna knew why Sudama had come. "He has come to ask for something," Krishna thought, "but only to please his anxious wife. His love for Me is so pure! He wants nothing for himself, but still I will reward His devotion with greater riches than he could ever imagine."

Krishna was very glad to see Sudama after so many years, and together they spoke of many things. "It is rare," Krishna said, "to find a devotee like you, so detached from the material world. But sometimes a devotee also accepts some wealth just to show others how to give in charity and use everything in devotional service."



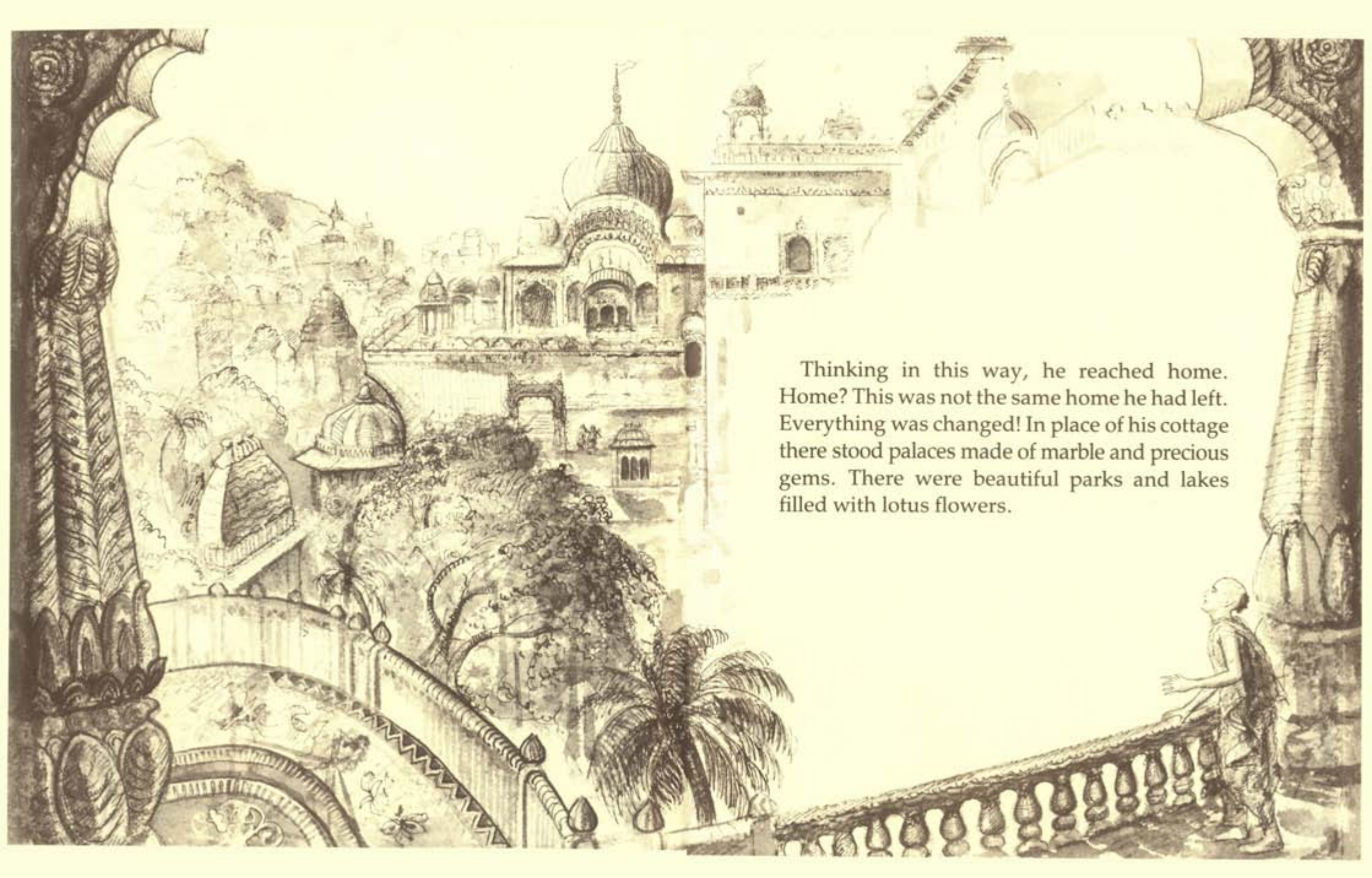
“Do you have a present for Me?” Krishna asked with a smile. Lord Krishna saw that Sudama was embarrassed to give Him the small bundle of chipped rice. “Dear friend, I certainly do not need anything, but a gift of love from My devotee, even a small gift, brings Me great pleasure.” He then snatched the bundle from Sudama’s shoulder and said, “What is this? Why, it is delicious chipped rice! Such a gift will not only satisfy Me, but also the whole universe!” And with that, Lord Krishna, who is accustomed to receiving millions of tasty offerings every day in temples around the world, ate one morsel of chipped rice and felt completely satisfied.

Queen Rukmini, the goddess of fortune, saw Krishna take a second morsel and start to eat it. Quickly she caught His hand and said, “Dear Lord, one grain of rice offered with love is enough to satisfy You. That one grain gives You greater pleasure than any quantity of riches offered without devotion.”



Krishna invited Sudama to spend the night in His palace. The next morning, after paying his respects to Lord Krishna, Sudama left Dwarka. "How fortunate I am," he thought. "Lord Krishna embraces the goddess of fortune, and yet He also embraced a poor brahmin like me. He sat me down on His own bed, fed me, massaged my legs. He considered me to be His brother. And Queen Rukmini was fanning me! What's more, He was so kind that He did not flatter me with riches. He knew I would become puffed up by wealth and soon forget Him."



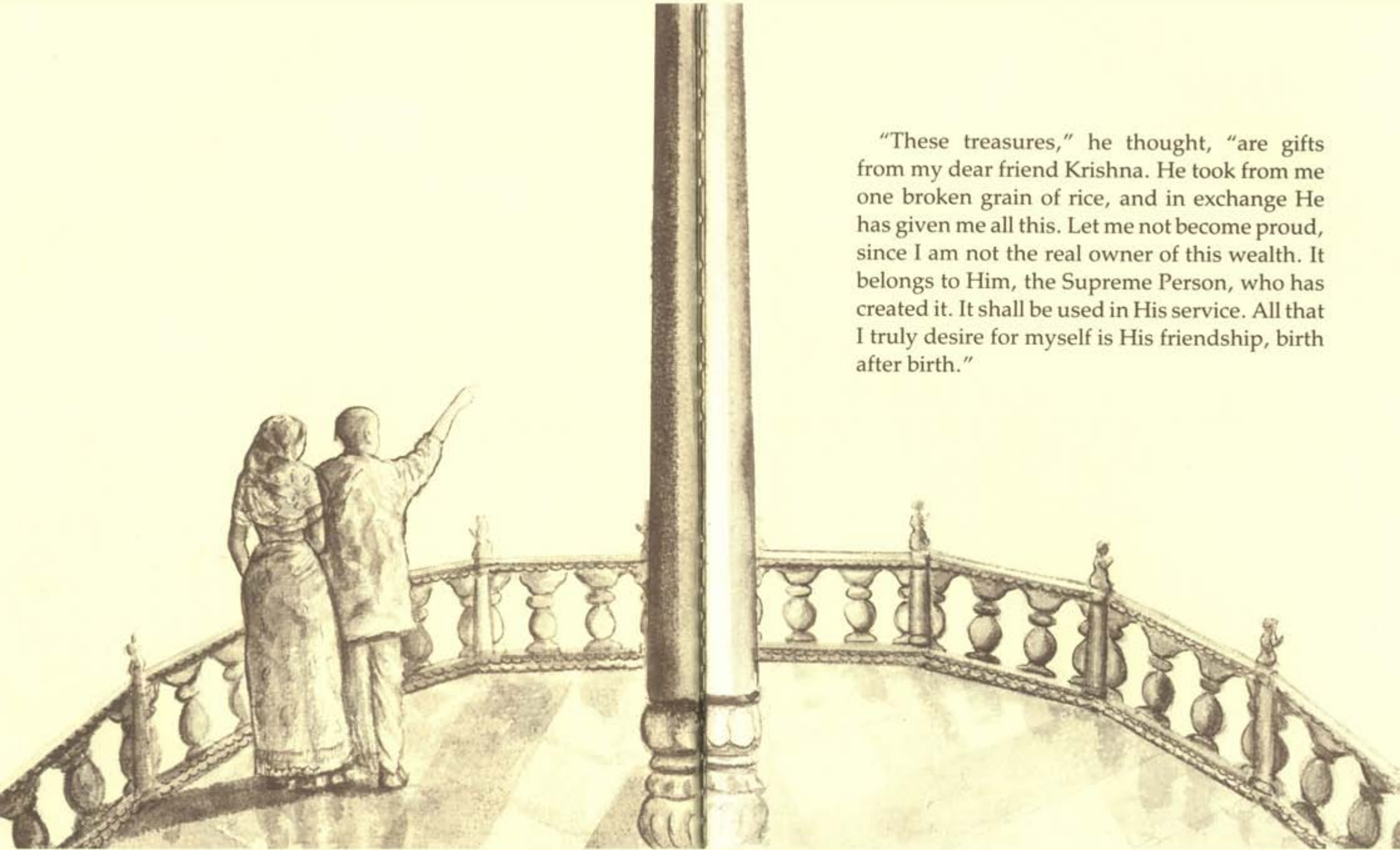


Thinking in this way, he reached home. Home? This was not the same home he had left. Everything was changed! In place of his cottage there stood palaces made of marble and precious gems. There were beautiful parks and lakes filled with lotus flowers.

"Maybe this is the wrong house," he thought. "If this is my home, what has happened?" At that moment he saw his wife, dressed like the goddess of fortune herself. Tears of joy fell from her eyes when she saw him, and together they entered their palace. Sudama gazed at the ivory columns covered with jewels, the golden thrones, and the artistic emerald carvings.

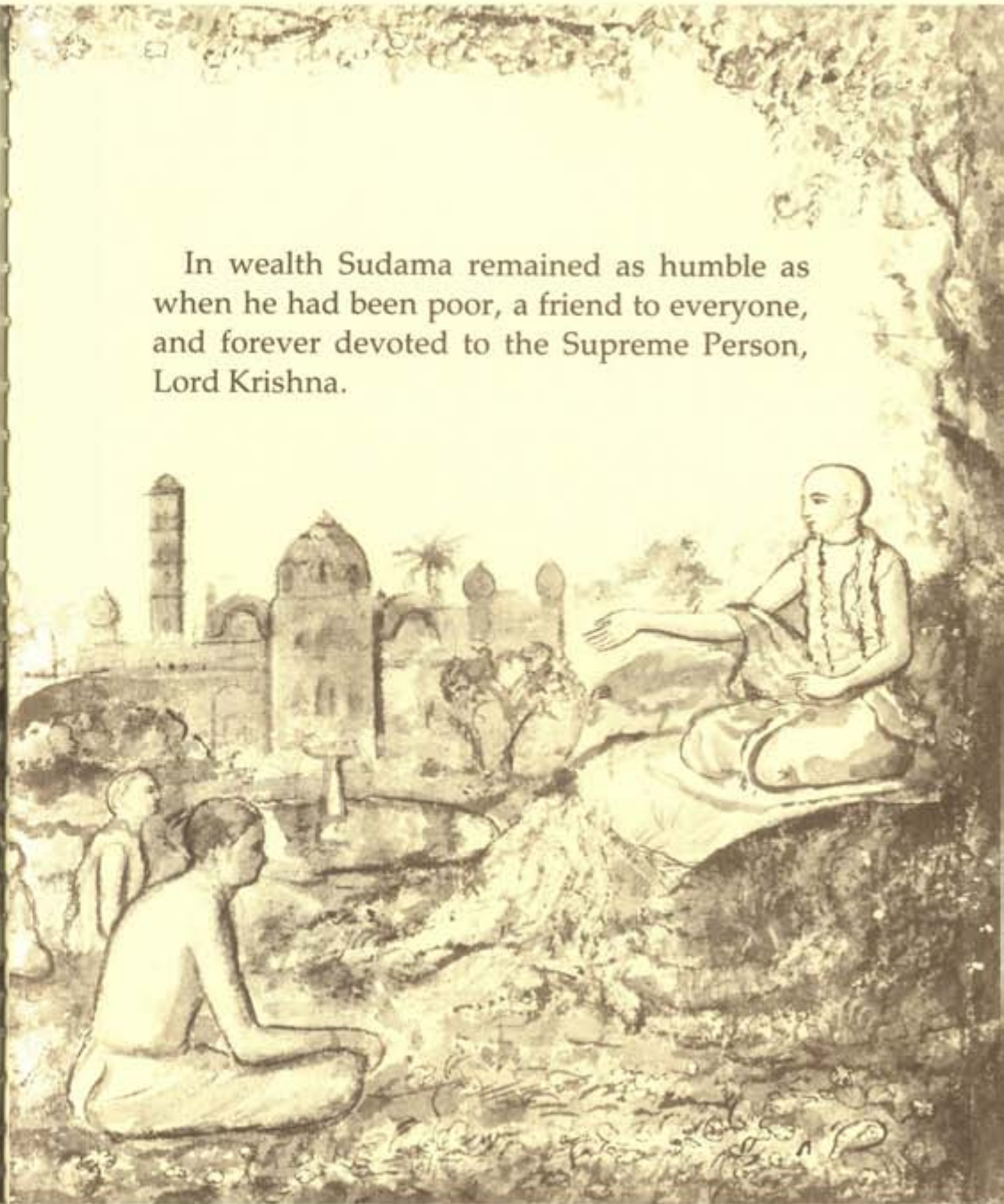


"These treasures," he thought, "are gifts from my dear friend Krishna. He took from me one broken grain of rice, and in exchange He has given me all this. Let me not become proud, since I am not the real owner of this wealth. It belongs to Him, the Supreme Person, who has created it. It shall be used in His service. All that I truly desire for myself is His friendship, birth after birth."





In wealth Sudama remained as humble as when he had been poor, a friend to everyone, and forever devoted to the Supreme Person, Lord Krishna.



Here ends the story of Sudama, the wise brahmin, who saw all creation as the property of the Supreme and who was thus a truly wealthy man.



