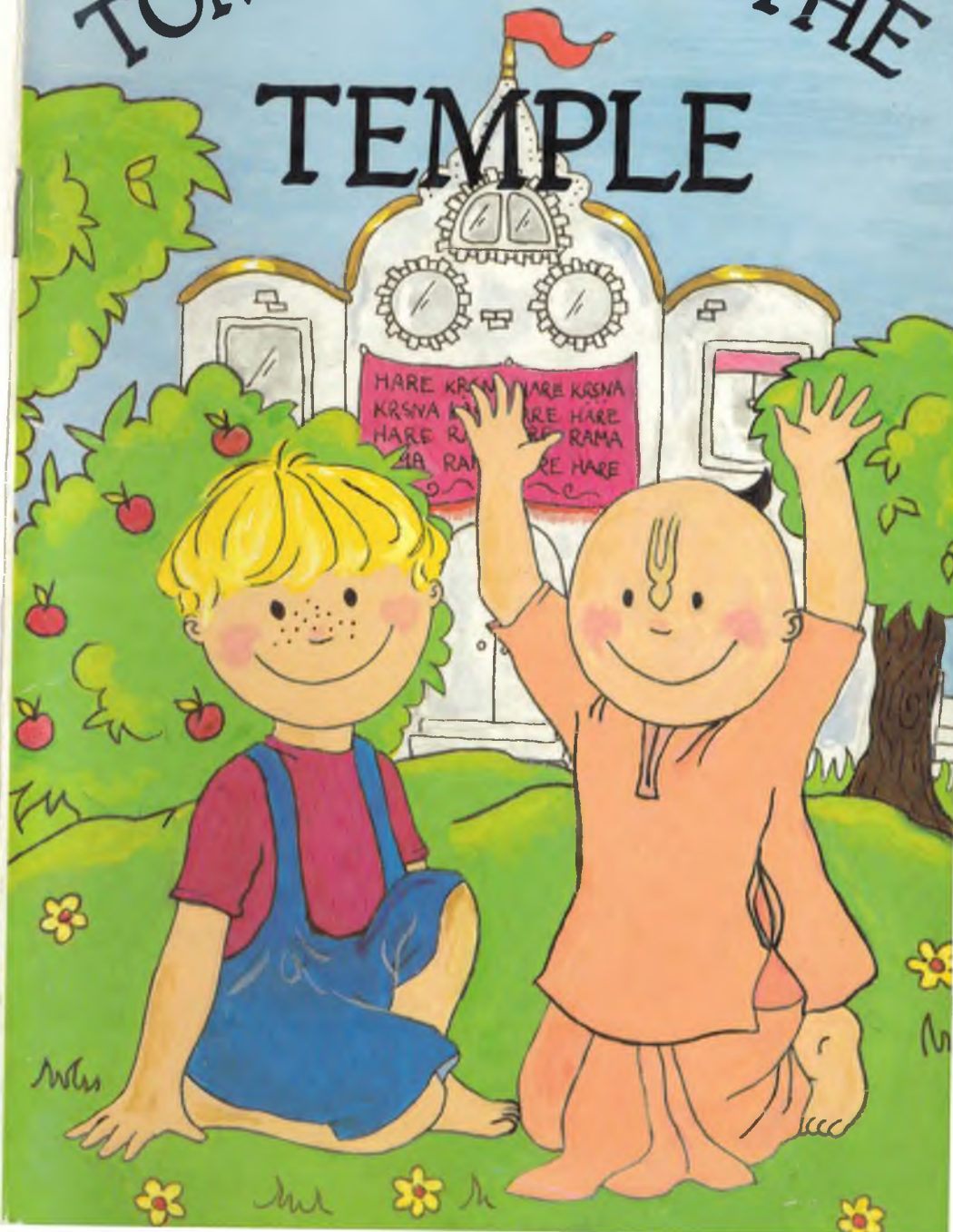


TOM'S TRIP TO THE TEMPLE



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TOM'S TRIP TO THE
TEMPLE

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TOM'S TRIP TO THE TEMPLE

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“Today we are going to a special place,” says Tom’s mother, as she helps him dress. “We are going to the Krishna temple.”

Usually Tom would get dressed by himself, but today he won’t. He’s upset because he wants to stay at home with his grandmother and his sister Polly. Polly hasn’t been feeling well.



Tom sits in the back of the car listening to Mum and Dad. They are saying how exciting it's going to be. But Tom is unhappy.

“Why do we have to go to a temple? What’s a temple anyway?” he wonders.



“Here we are,” says Dad.

The car stops outside a great big house. Up on top, Tom sees a bright red flag. Outside, there are lots of strange-looking people.

Tom feels shy and a little scared. He doesn't know anybody and doesn't see anyone to play with.



When they are out of the car, someone calls out, "Hare Krishna!"

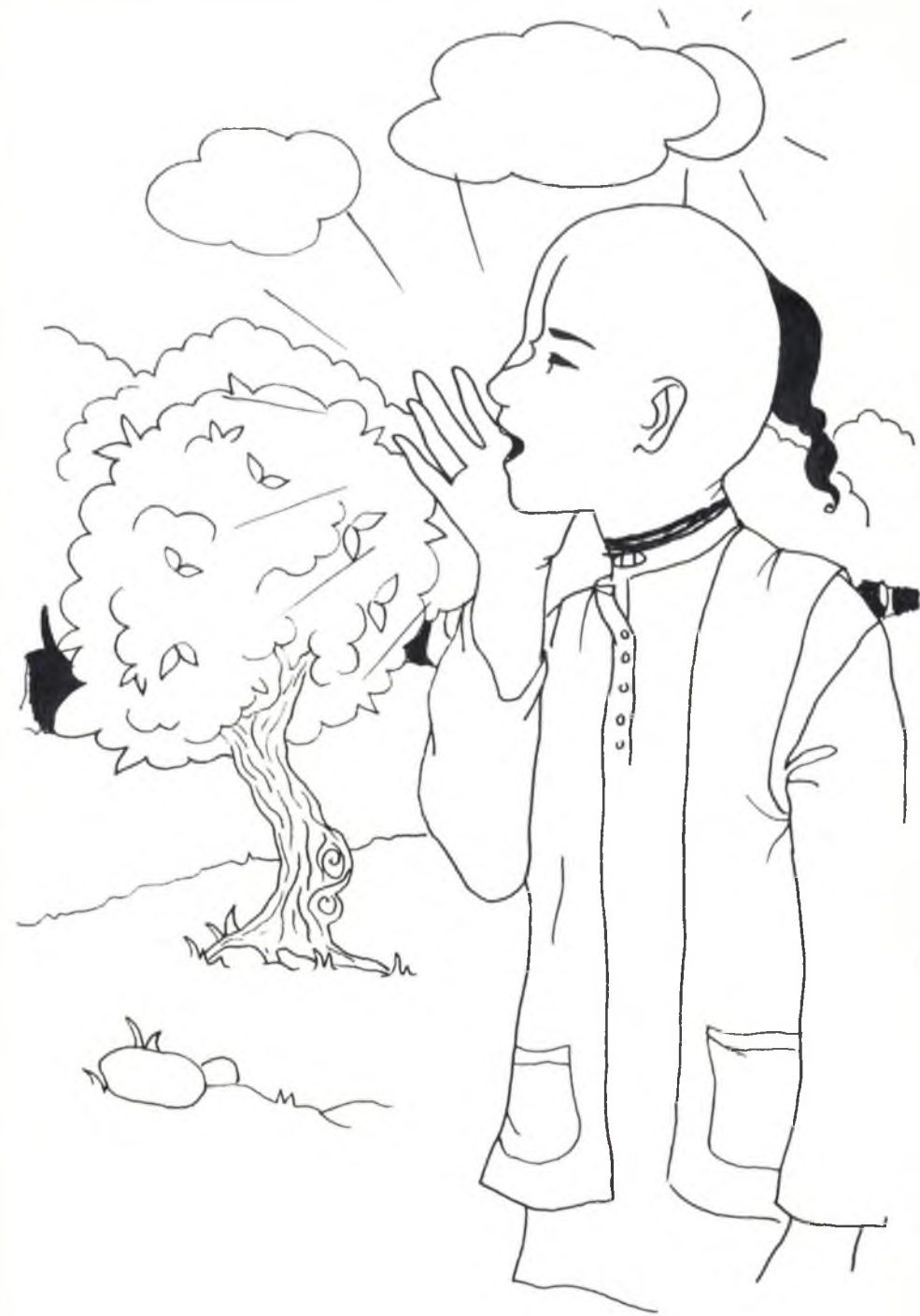
Tom looks up and sees a man with funny white clothes and a shaved head walking towards them. As the man comes closer, Tom hides behind his mother. He wants to go home now.

Mum strokes his head and tells him there is no need to be frightened.



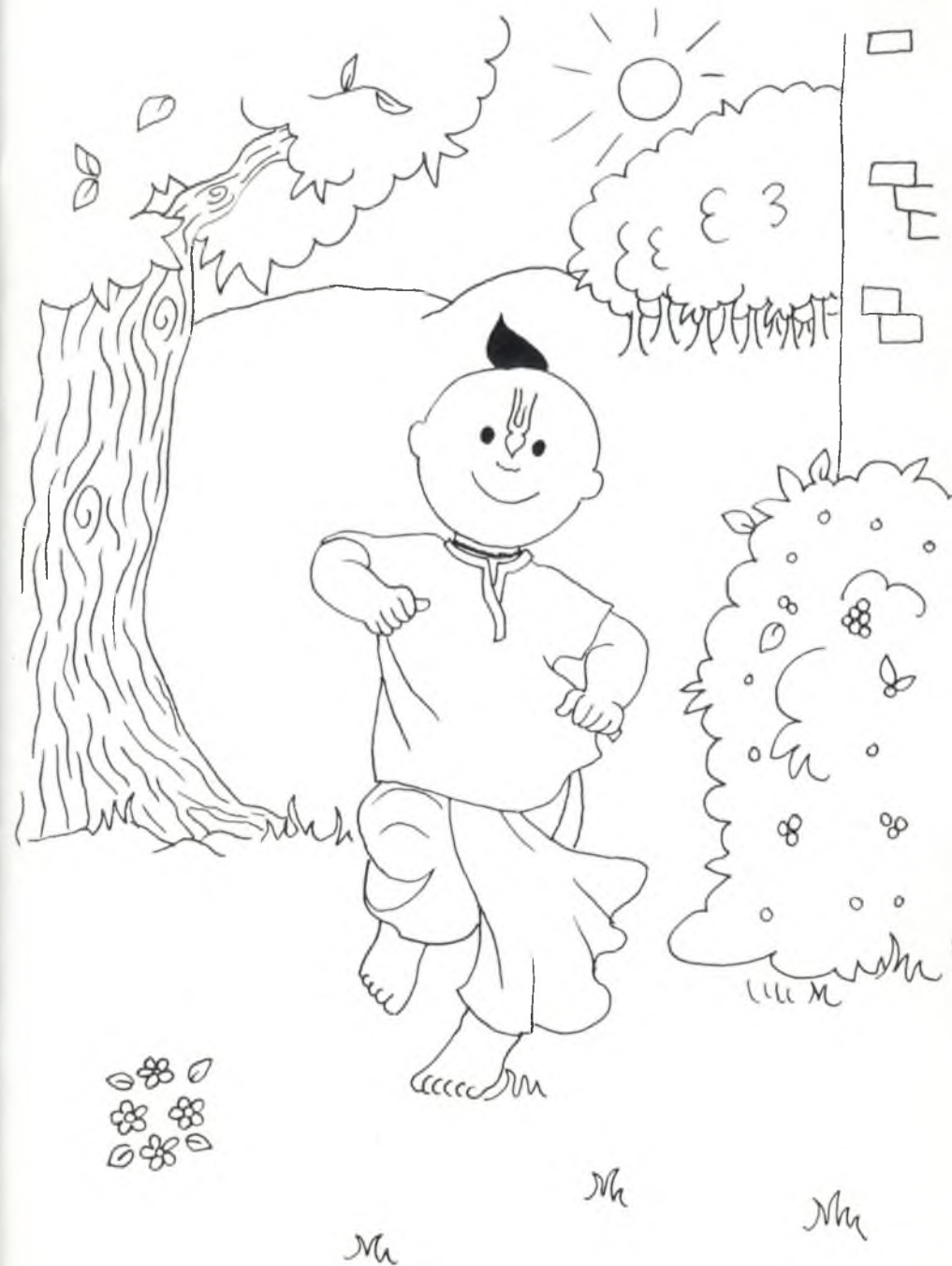
The man in white can see that Tom needs someone his own size to play with. Suddenly, he calls out, "Subal! Come here!"

Tom turns around and sees a boy racing like lightning from the big house. Tom, with his mouth wide open, stares and stares.



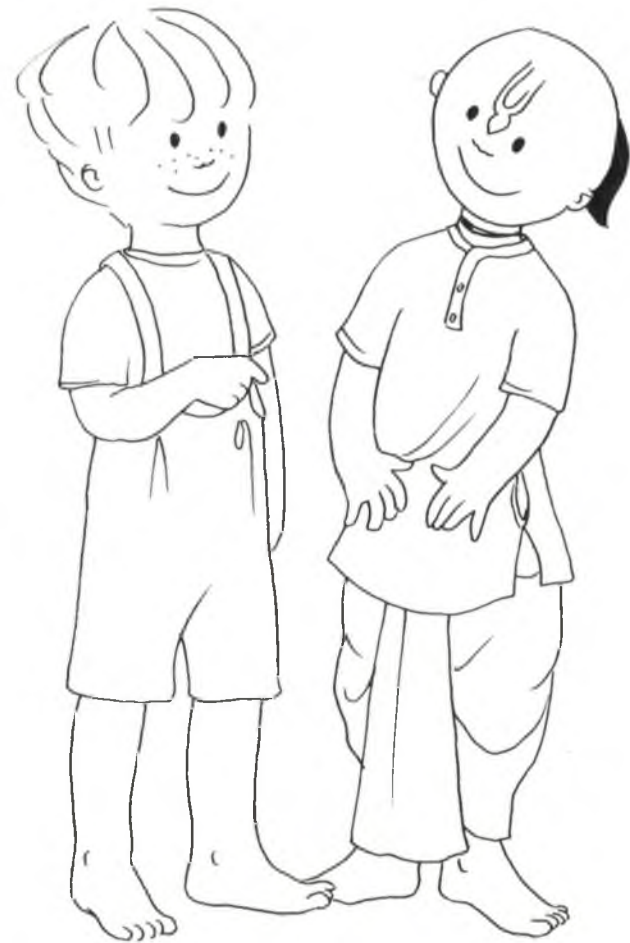
Subal comes running over to them. His clothes are bright orange, and they fly around him as he runs.

Subal is just the same size as Tom. But he seems so different. His face is like a shining moon. The only hair on his head is a small black tuft, fluttering at the back.



“What a funny name and funny clothes you’ve got,” says Tom. “My name is Tom, and I wear shorts like all my friends at home.”

“Come on,” says Subal. “I’ll show you the temple!”



So, Tom has got a new friend to play with. He has forgotten about being shy or scared. Subal takes Tom by the hand, and they run together over the soft green grass toward the temple.



**Ting ting ting! Boom boom boom!
Ting-a-ling-a-ling! What a sound!**

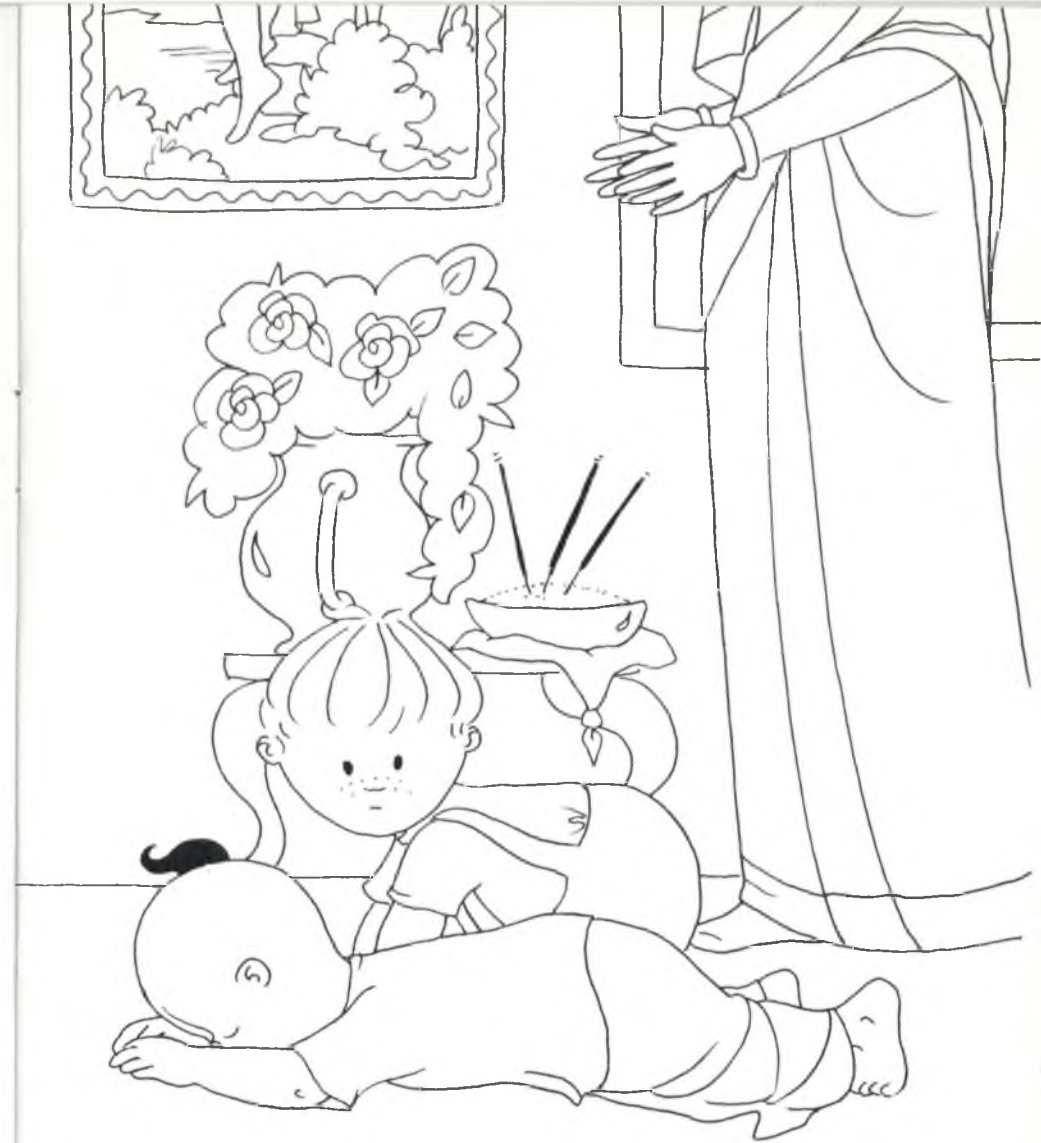
**In a large room, beautifully decorated
with pictures, flowers, and flags, Tom sees
a lot of people dressed like Subal.
Everybody is singing and dancing.
Tom gets butterflies in his tummy.**

**In the doorway, he sees Mum smiling
and looking very happy. All the butterflies
disappear, and Tom feels happy too.**



But what now? As Subal walks in the room, he drops down and lies flat on the floor. Tom can hear he is quietly saying something.

Subal says it's a special prayer. Tom bows down too and says a prayer, "Dear God, thank You for my new friend. And please help Polly to get better. Thank You."



“This is where God lives,” says Subal. He points at the most beautiful sight Tom has ever seen – all different colored clothes that sparkle and shine in the light – and two sweet smiling faces. Tom stands with open mouth, looking and looking.

“His name is Krishna,” says Subal, smiling.



Tom looks over at Subal. He is dancing – jumping up and down and spinning round with the music.

Tom dances for Krishna too, like a bouncing rubber ball. “This is really fun,” he thinks. “It’s even better than playing in the sand with my big dumper truck.”



The words to the song are easy and soon Tom starts to sing along.

“You’ll never get tired of chanting Hare Krishna,” says Subal. “We’re chanting God’s names!”

“I wish Polly were here, so she could sing for Krishna too,” thinks Tom.



After the dancing finishes, they sit down and are given plates. The plates are piled high with all different kinds of food. There are vegetables and drinks and sweets. It looks tasty, and Tom doesn't know where to begin.

"This is called prasadam*," explains Subal. "It's food that Krishna has tasted."

* *Prasadam* means "mercy," and is food that has been offered to Krishna.



Tom doesn't like the idea of eating Krishna's food. Krishna might get angry like Polly did when Tom took her cake and she told Mum.

Subal tells him that Krishna won't mind at all. He wants everybody to eat His food.

Tom is glad that Krishna has enough to share. It all tastes so good.



When they finish eating, they both wash their hands and mouths.

Then Subal shows Tom a big book and tells him that Krishna wrote it. “Does God write books?” asks Tom. “My grandma told me He just sits up in the sky and sees if we are being good or bad.”



Subal shows Tom a picture of how the body changes from a baby to a boy to a grown-up. Then it grows old and dies.

“But you don’t die,” says Subal. “You just change your body. You are the soul in the body. And the soul never dies.”



Tom and Subal's mothers are sitting and talking. Subal's mother has long braided hair, right down to the floor. She is explaining that we are not the body – we are spirit-souls.

“That sounds too hard when you are only four,” thinks Tom. “When I don't need braces on my blue-jeans anymore, then I'll be big enough to be a spirit-soul.”



Subal tells Tom that spirit-souls get new bodies when the old ones die.

Tom says, "Oh, that's just like changing clothes when they get old and worn out, or too small."

"That's right," says Subal's mother. "You're a clever boy." Tom's mum is very pleased with her clever son and gives him a big hug.



Soon it's time to go home.

Dad has bought so many books that Tom can't count them all. He can hardly see over the top.

"Watch out you don't fall over!" says Mum.

"Now we can read all about Krishna, and there's lots of pictures to look at too," says Dad to Tom.

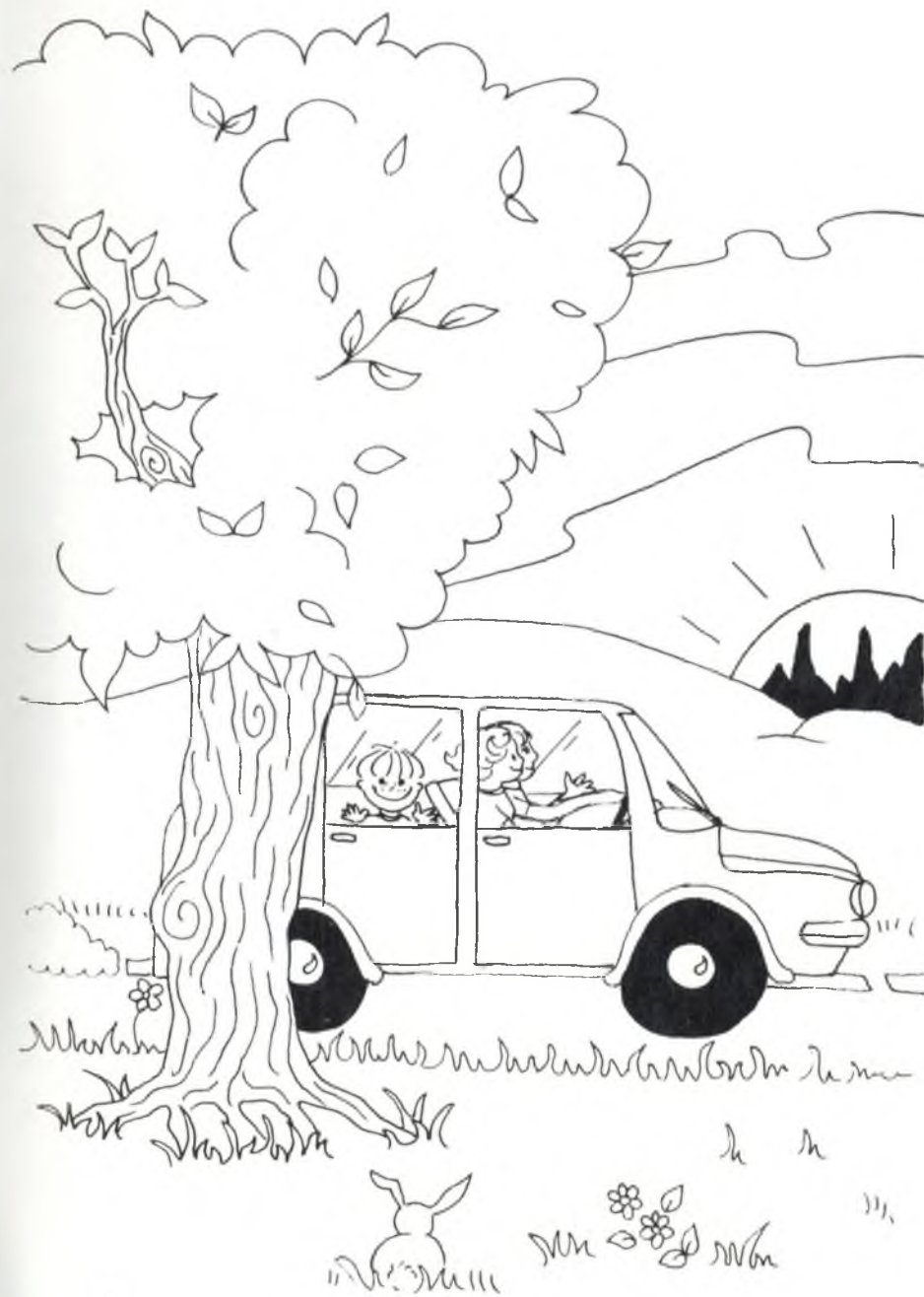


On the way home, Mum and Dad and Tom all sing the song they learned at the temple. Mum claps her hands and Dad taps his foot. The car is bouncing down the road.

“Careful! Don’t forget you’re driving!” says Mum.

“But I’m so happy that we finally went to the temple,” Dad says.

Tom is happy too. He has got a new friend. And he has seen Krishna, who is the best friend of everyone.



As the sun sets behind the pine trees, Tom falls fast asleep. He dreams about all the wonderful new things he has seen at the temple. His new friend is there, with his flying clothes and fluttering tuft of hair.



In the dream Subal tells Tom, "Don't forget to sing for Krishna! Every day sing,

HARE KRISHNA, HARE KRISHNA,

KRISHNA KRISHNA, HARE HARE.

HARE RAMA, HARE RAMA,

RAMA RAMA, HARE HARE."



If you want to know more about Krishna
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