



CREATING SPACES
TO SHARE OUR STORIES
AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS DIVIDES

Where can we find Wisdom? – HINDUISM

Background:

This story comes from the *Panchatantra*: it means Five Treaties and is an ancient Indian collection of more than 35 fables written in Sanskrit. The stories appear in lots of Hindu texts passed from generation to generation. Some parts of the Panchatantra were written down and date to about 200BC. However, the stories are from an oral tradition dating much further back. The themes of the stories are about friendship, thinking carefully before you act and not judging others. This story, even though it seems simple, can be linked to lots of important things we need to learn today, including thinking carefully about where information comes from and making sure you have trustworthy and honest friends.



Sharma and the Sheep - (Story can be found on back)

Follow up questions:

1. Can you describe how the crooks try to steal the sheep away from Sharma?
2. Why do you think Sharma thought he was carrying a dog not a sheep?
3. Sharma thought he was clever. What made him think differently?
4. What do you think he could have done differently to hold onto the truth?
5. What can you do to stop yourself from being tricked into believing something that is not true?

Sharma and the Sheep

There was a man called Sharma who thought he was very strong and clever. Sharma planned to take a sheep and two bags of special firewood to the king who prayed to the Lord of Fire. 'The king will be pleased with what I can offer him,' Sharma thought.

Though the day was clear, Sharma didn't see three crooks hidden in the bushes. The hungry leader of the crooks whispered to his partners, "God has finally sent this man with some firewood and a whole sheep for us to eat!" The crooks knew that Sharma was smart and strong; they knew they needed to do more than just hurt him in order to get what they wanted. "We will need to get him to give us the sheep without realising!" the leader said. They began to plot...

The first crook ran alongside him and called out, "Why are you carrying this dog to take to the king? Can't you see it's dirty and you've got it on your shoulders!" Sharma laughed and replied, "This is a sheep! Can't you see? It doesn't look like a dog at all!" The crook replied, "Ok, if you think it is not a dog but a sheep, please carry on!" With that, the crook slunk off into the shadows with a grin upon his face.

Sharma thought to himself how some people weren't as clever as him. He had hardly walked on when the second crook stopped him in his tracks. The crook said, "Do you know you are carrying a dog on your shoulders? No matter how strong or smart you think you are, if you carry animals like that it isn't good for you!" Sharma replied, "It isn't a dog, it is a..." "If you think it is a sheep," interrupted the crook, "and I think it is a dog, who really knows what is true!"

With that, the crook ran off. 'How strange', Sharma thought. He looked to his right and his left. He saw black trotters that were beginning to look like paws...Shaking his head, Sharma carried on. Before long, the third crook approached him. "Excuse me sir, you are carrying a dog on your shoulders. It looks really odd, if I were you, I would leave it here with me," said the third crook.

Even though he was usually calm and clever, three people telling him he wasn't carrying a sheep was convincing, especially when he was tired from walking. He lowered the animal to the ground to check for himself. As Sharma turned his back to tell off the third crook, the remaining two grabbed his belongings and ran off into the distance. Sharma realised he should have ignored the lies the men had told him because a lie spoken repeatedly will eventually feel as if it is true.

(This story comes from The Panchatantra, which means Five Treaties)